

Circuit Court for Baltimore City

Term of Court Annual Report

October 25, 2005

Photograph on Cover:

Artglass Skylight above
Ceremonial Court Lobby
Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr. Courthouse

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Circuit Court for Baltimore City

Judges of the Circuit Court

Honorable Joseph H. H. Kaplan, Chief Judge
Honorable Marcella A. Holland, Administrative Judge

Honorable Thomas E. Noel	Honorable M. Brooke Murdock
Honorable Clifton J. Gordy, Jr.	Honorable Stuart R. Berger
Honorable John N. Prevas	Honorable Wanda K. Heard
Honorable John C. Themelis	Honorable Audrey J. S. Carrion
Honorable Paul A. Smith	Honorable Kaye Allison
Honorable Joseph P. McCurdy	Honorable John M. Glynn
Honorable Martin P. Welch	Honorable John P. Miller
Honorable Carol E. Smith	Honorable Lynn K. Stewart
Honorable Albert J. Matricciani	Honorable Shirley M. Watts
Honorable David W. Young	Honorable Edward R. K. Hargadon
Honorable Bonita J. Dancy	Honorable Althea M. Handy
Honorable Evelyn O. Cannon	Honorable Sylvester B. Cox
Honorable Allen L. Schwait	Honorable W. Michel Pierson
Honorable Alfred Nance	Honorable Gale E. Rasin

Visiting Retired Judges

Honorable Paul E. Alpert	Honorable David B. Mitchell
Honorable Roger W. Brown	Honorable Richard T. Rombro
Honorable John Carroll Byrnes	Honorable David Ross
Honorable Hilary D. Caplan	Honorable Thomas Ward
Honorable Kathleen O'Ferrall Friedman	Honorable Thomas Waxter
Honorable Ellen M. Heller	

Masters of the Circuit Court

Master Bradley O. Bailey	Master Kathryn E. Koshel
Master Robert L. Bloom	Master Richard D. Lawlor
Master Claudette M. Brown	Master Zakia Mahasa
Master Patricia L. Brown	Master Susan M. Marzetta
Master James P. Casey	Master Christopher L. Panos
Master Theresa A. Furnari	Master Gregory Sampson
Master Linda A. Koban	Master Yolanda Tanner

Administrators of the Circuit Court

Beverly B. Carter, Esq.
Court Administrator

Neil B. Moores
Director, Information Technology

Marilyn F. Bentley
Associate Administrator, Civil

Rafael C. Ortiz
Associate Administrator, Criminal

T. Sue German
Associate Administrator, Family

A. Dale Hendrick
Associate Administrator, Juvenile

Court Medical Office

Thomas J. Oglesby, M.D., Chief Medical Officer
Beverly F. Wise, LCSW-C, Administrative Director

Tonya D. Tuggle, M.D., Director, Juvenile Medical Section
Frank Eisenberg, M.D., Psychiatrist

Harriet S. Miller, Ph.D., Psychologist
Lawrence D. Heller, Ph.D., Psychologist
Patricia J. Lackey, Ph.D., Psychologist
Jay I. Levinson, Ph.D., Psychologist

Yvonne C. D. David, LCSW-C, Coordinator, Community Affairs
Brenda S. Harriel-Timmons, LCSW-C, Coordinator, Juvenile
Medical Section

Jane Tambree, LCSW-C, Coordinator, F.A.S.T. Program
Krista Hrasar, LCSW-C, Social Worker
Cory Kline, LCSW-C, Social Worker and Clinical Coordinator
Leonard Bracey, LGSW, Social Worker
Scott Soud, Masters in Counseling

Tanya Prince, BSAS Addictions Counselor

Kenneth Rodgers, M.D., Director, CMET Program
Lula Heatley, LCSW-C, Program Coordinator, CMET Program
Madia Clark, Administrative Assistant, CMET Program

Clerk of the Court

Frank M. Conaway

Sheriff

John W. Anderson

INTRODUCTION

This is the Circuit Court for Baltimore City's first Term of Court Annual Report. It is being released on the same day that we resume the Term of Court Ceremony in collaboration with The Bar Association of Baltimore City and The Courthouse and Law Museum Foundation. The Term of Court Ceremony has a rich history and tradition and we are proud to resume the ceremony. It was for that reason we chose to name our Fifth Annual Report in honor of this ceremony. We hope to continue this tradition.

During fiscal year 2005, the Circuit Court for Baltimore City continued to implement new initiatives in the face of ever increasing case loads, challenges, and ever increasing problems with our physical facility. Without question we are the busiest court in the State. Because of that we are always searching for initiatives that will help us administer justice, not only equitably but in a timely manner. This challenge of course, always stimulates our creativity. Listed below are just a few highlights and a few new initiatives that you will find in the report to whet your appetite so that you will read the rest of the report and learn in greater detail of programs in all our divisions.

- ◆ Our Civil Docket continues to use mediation as a tool to effectively handle cases. The Medical Malpractice and Professional Liability Mediation Programs have been widely recognized and have become very successful. Because of this we are now starting a pilot program for mediation in Motor Tort cases.
- ◆ The success of E-Filing in our Asbestos Docket has led us to initiate a plan to expand e-filing to Foreclosure cases and other cases in the Civil Docket. It also has brought us visitors from foreign countries and other parts of the State to view our e-filing process.
- ◆ In our Family Division/Domestic, we have completed our Parenting Plan Pilot Project which is designed to determine whether requiring parents to complete parenting plans in order resolve their child access issues would have a positive or negative effect on case management. The results are inconclusive; however, we have gained valuable data information and it is anticipated that there will be continued recommendation for the use of parenting plans in our Case Management System.
- ◆ Because the Domestic Division saw an increase of third parties coming in to gain custody of children, an educational seminar was established for third party custodians such as grandparents. This brings to three (3) the number of educational seminars built around parenting. This new seminar joins our Cope and Shape Programs.
- ◆ In addition to the mediation services used at Sheppard Pratt, the division initiated an in-house mediation program for cases where the parties cannot go to Sheppard Pratt or in cases which seem ripe at the earliest conference for immediate mediation to resolve the issues.

- ◆ In our Criminal Division a new policy was implemented allowing defendants with general felonies (non-drug cases) to waive hearings and proceedings through their attorney. This policy was developed to eliminate a step in the process when it only served as a venue for scheduling a trial date.
- ◆ The Criminal Division established a procedure to get notice of violations of probations to the public defenders earlier so that they would have a better opportunity to interview their clients prior their VOP Hearing.
- ◆ The division continued to collaborate with the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council and, as a result of that collaboration presented the Juror Awareness Week in the last week of January, 2005.
- ◆ Our Juvenile Division has been extremely successful in dispositions especially in delinquency cases. The total dispositions for fiscal year 2005 exceeded new case filings, resulting in a disposition to filing rate of 109%. In addition, the most recent case standard review indicated that 92% of the juvenile court delinquency cases were closed within the State's standard of 90 days.
- ◆ The Juvenile Division set a mandatory twenty-one (21) day adjudication date for all detained respondents charged with a drug related offense, reducing the length of stay in detention and in case processing time.
- ◆ The division also established and implemented an immediate charging unit at Central Intake at the Juvenile Justice Center, working from noon to midnight, five (5) days a week to provide immediate reviews of arrests and make decisions with respect to charging juveniles with specific offenses and preparing petitions for court. The result of those cases processed revealed a failure to appear rate of less than 3%.
- ◆ It also established and implemented a Call Notification Unit in the Clerk's Office to telephone and remind the respondents and their parents of scheduled hearing dates and times. This effort, in collaboration with efforts of the State's Attorneys Office to notify victims and witnesses, has substantially improved the appearance rate of individuals at court hearings.
- ◆ Lastly, the Juvenile Division has begun a Family Recovery Program for substance abusing parents of children in need of assistance that will either accelerate reunification with the child or assist the court in establishing other permanency options for the child.

These are just the highlights and at the back of this report you will find continued courthouse and new courthouse initiatives.

There is no denying that this court has many challenges and difficult problems to resolve, but all of our judges remain steadfast in their determination to deliver effective, equitable and fair justice to all citizens of this City without respect to race, creed, religion, class or income. We also remain resolved in our efforts to provide our court services to the public in a clean, safe and healthy environment. Our pledge has always been to do justice in fairness and in a timely manner. This report demonstrates our continuing commitment to that pledge.

Marcella A. Holland
Administrative Judge

October, 2005

**Circuit Court for Baltimore City
Civil Division**

**The Honorable Evelyn Omega Cannon
Judge-in-Charge**

**Marilyn Bentley
Associate Administrator**

MISSION STATEMENT

The goal of the Civil Division is to provide an orderly process for the prompt and efficient resolution of civil disputes. A differentiated case management plan is used to process and track all cases to final disposition consistent with the guidelines set forth by the Administrative Office of the Courts. All civil non-domestic matters within the Court's jurisdiction are managed recognizing that the Civil Division is composed of many interconnected units that in turn impact all other divisions of the Court.

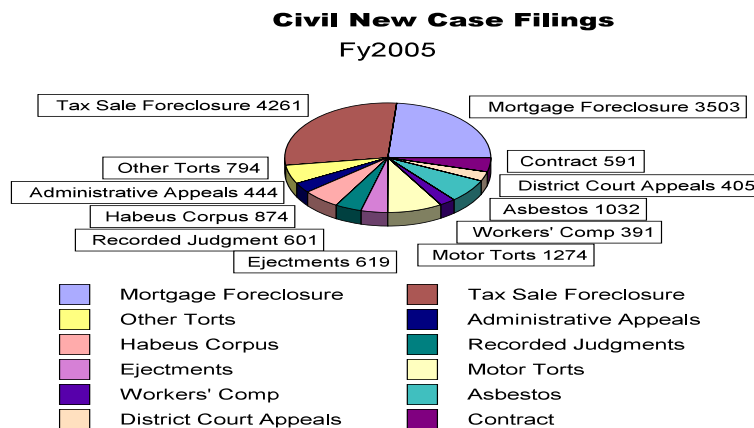
GENERAL STATISTICS

Overall the total number of civil non-domestic new case filings increased in Fiscal Year 2005. In the prior year fifteen thousand nine hundred fifty (15,950) cases were instituted. The total number of new civil cases in FY2005 was sixteen thousand three hundred seventy-four (16,374).

Complaints to Foreclose the Right of Redemption after Tax Sale increased by eleven and three-tenths percent (11.3%). The Mayor's initiative designated as Project 5000 is one of the two factors contributing to this increase. In this endeavor the City of Baltimore is seeking title to 5000 properties, to make available for renovation and development. A total of one thousand six hundred fifty-six (1,656) such cases were filed by the City since July, 2003. The second factor appears to be a general increase in Tax sales driven by market forces in local real estate. Tax sale foreclosures totaled four thousand two hundred sixty-one (4,261). New case filings for Mortgage Foreclosures totaled three thousand five hundred three (3,503). In summary, forty seven percent (47%) of all new case filings for the year were Foreclosures.

New Case filings have fluctuated in other categories as well. In FY2004, the statistics appeared to suggest that the Court experienced a one hundred eighty percent (180%) increase in Medical Malpractice cases from the fifty-five such cases filed in FY2003 versus one hundred fifty-four (154) filed in FY2004. This statistic was misleading, however, because prior to 2003 Medical Malpractice cases were included in the Court's "Other Tort" category. Since 2003 the Court has identified and separately categorized Medical Malpractice cases in an effort to better manage complex litigation. Thus the "Other Tort" category declined with a corresponding increase in Medical Malpractice cases. There were one hundred thirty-two new cases filed in this category in FY2005.

In the Lead Paint category, there were one hundred ninety seven (197) new case filings in FY2005, fifteen (15) more than the number of filings in FY2004. This resulted in an eight percent (8%) increase in that category. These increases in complex litigation have a significant effect on the Court as these cases often require a minimum of two to four weeks of trial.



PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

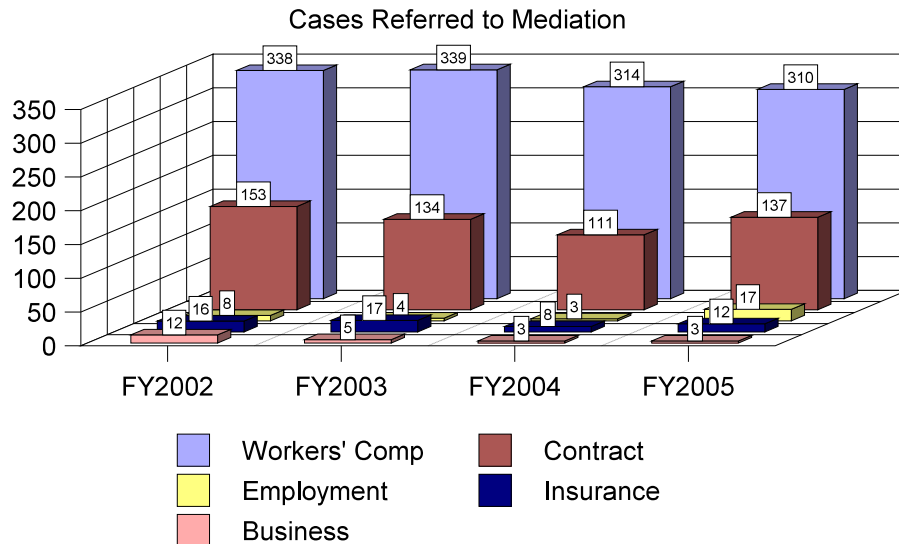
Asbestos

There were 1032 new asbestos cases filed in FY2005 on the Court's E-filing system. Included in this total are 65 trial clusters. A scheduling order has been developed for these clusters that sets these trial clusters at intervals of every three weeks. E-filing is used exclusively for asbestos litigation. This web based pilot project allows immediate access to all documents and also provides immediate 24 hour availability of the docket to all parties. Each document receives a unique identifying number which greatly simplifies tracking. During FY2005 an average of 4,300 documents per month were filed and processed. Judge Richard Rombro and Judge M. Brooke Murdock continue to manage the asbestos cases.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

The Alternative Dispute Resolution programs, vital to the civil docket in the past, are more important to the efficient operation of the civil docket for the foreseeable future. ADR programs are now employed in an increased variety of case types to ensure that litigants have varied opportunities to resolve disputes prior to trial. Settlement conferences are court ordered for all cases that are issued a full scheduling order. These conferences are assigned to the Volunteer Mediation Program, composed of attorneys approved by the court, or to one of the judges hearing Civil cases during the term the conference is assigned.

The initial Mediation Program which began in November 1999, established court ordered mediation for the following case types: workers' compensation, contract, insurance, business and commercial, employment, and environment. In 2003, Medical and Professional Malpractice cases were added to the initial program. The statistics for the year document that 619 cases were referred to mediation. In the workers' compensation category 46.8% of the cases that went to mediation were settled. This statistic is remarkable because mediation in these cases is court ordered prior to the close of discovery. Judge W. Michel Pierson has assumed responsibility for the Mediation Program.



Business and Technology

In calendar year 2004, thirty-seven (37) cases were accepted into the Business and Technology Program from 43 requests for this special assignment. This number is almost twice the number of cases accepted in the prior year. All requests are reviewed and cases accepted into the program are assigned to one of the three judges in the program by the program Director. Program specifics, information, published opinions and profiles of the assigned judges are posted on the Court's and the State Judiciary's web sites. Since the program's implementation, Judges Albert J. Matricciani, Evelyn Omega Cannon, and Kaye Allison have been assigned to the program. Through the Conference of Circuit Judges and the Judicial Institute, the designated judges have received specialized training over the past 3 years and continue to participate in relevant conferences and training in connection with the American College of Business Court Judges and the AEI-Brookings Joint Center for Regulatory Studies in Washington, D.C.

INITIATIVES

Mediation

Preliminary discussions have been held with the local bar association to format a plan for the inclusion of an early mediation program for motor torts. This project will incorporate some components of the current court ordered mediation program with provisions for the early resolution of personal injury cases. Based on prior outcomes in cases court ordered to mediation, there are significant benefits to both the litigants and the Court, including reduced time to disposition and reduction of costs.

The Civil Mediation Program will participate in the Maryland Senior Mediation Project which will extend and expand mediation services to senior citizens. It is anticipated that adult guardianship matters will be one of the first focus areas.

E-filing

E-filing has the potential to expand in two directions. The first is an expansion of electronic filing to additional areas of the civil docket with initial emphasis on Mortgage Foreclosures . Meetings have been held to explore this project with the expectation that a plan will be developed in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the Maryland Rules. The other possible utilization of E-filing is the possibility to incorporate parts of the technology into the Business and Technology Program. These plans where appropriate would be submitted for approval to the State Court Administrator and then the Court of Appeals.

As implemented for the asbestos cases, E-filing has created a partnership among its users that encourages timely resolution of misfiling and errors in filing. There has been remarkable improvement in the collection of fees and costs, significant reduction in the number of clerks required to process pleadings and to update of the docket, and significant decrease in the space required for file storage. Civil processing for other case types continues in a paper based environment providing an ongoing opportunity to compare and contrast the benefit of web based technology. This project has received visits from delegations representing Israel, Japan and Egypt as well as state and national recognition.



Marilyn Bentley and Judge Cannon discuss E-filing with Egyptian judicial officials.



Judge Evelyn Omega Cannon (right), Judge in Charge-Civil and Marilyn Bentley, Associate Administrator, respond to questions from Japanese officials during their visit to the court.

Advanced Science and Technology Program

Judges Evelyn Omega Cannon , Kaye Allison , and Stuart R. Berger have been selected for a unique opportunity to participate in the Advanced Science and Technology Program . Nationwide participants from three states, Maryland, Ohio, and California, were designated for training at the National Judges Science School. This program will expose the judges to a variety of science and technology issues so that each has an understanding of the implication of court decisions in these areas. At the conclusion of the training, the judges will become leaders and trainers for other judges in Maryland, serve as liaison to local bar associations, and become a resource for other states and countries.

**Circuit Court for Baltimore City
Family Division/Domestic**

**The Honorable Audrey J. S. Carrion
Judge-in-Charge**

**T. Sue German, Esquire
Associate Administrator, Family**

Mission

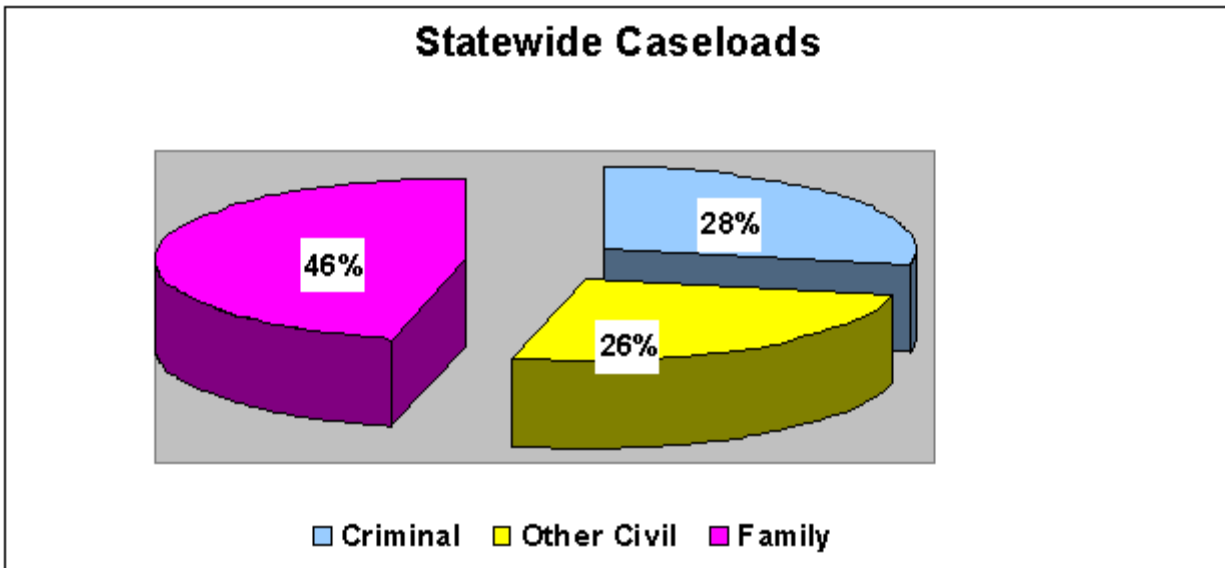
The Family Division/Domestic of the Circuit Court for Baltimore City exists to serve families in crisis. Substance abuse, domestic violence, child abuse and a plethora of other social problems are increasingly prevalent in large urban populations like Baltimore City. Thus, nonlegal issues are frequently at the heart of the legal disputes that individuals bring to the court.

The Family Division of the Circuit Court for Baltimore City focuses on assisting families in crisis with obtaining necessary services while efficiently managing and effectively adjudicating their legal disputes. The ultimate objective of the division is to use programs, services, community resources, and specialized personnel to address underlying family problems in order to obviate the need for future legal intervention.

General Information

Caseloads

During FY04 128,854 Family cases were initiated in Maryland. According to statistics furnished by the Department of Family Administration, this represents seventy-two percent (72%) of all civil legal matters and forty-six percent (46%) of overall Circuit Court caseloads.



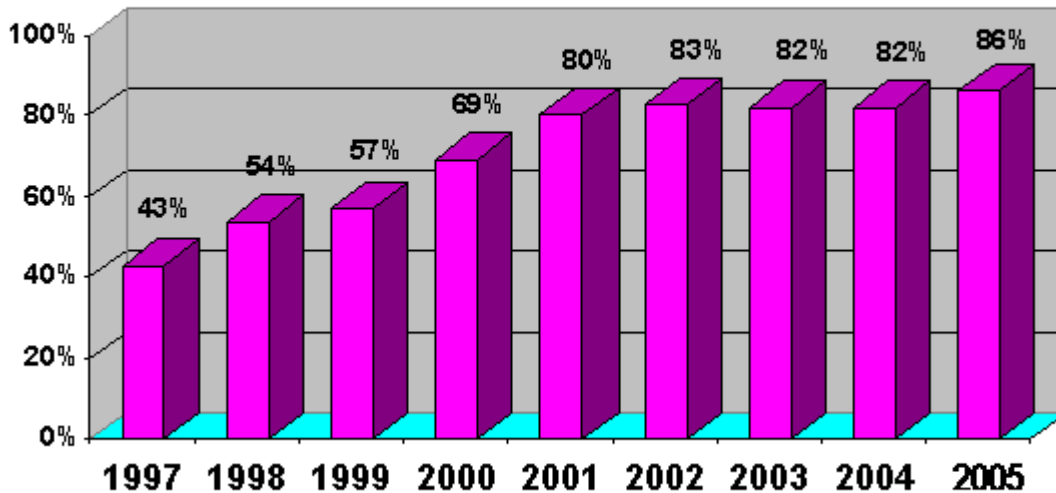
Baltimore City reported 10,377 new filings in family cases in FY05. That number does not include cases that were reopened, however, so the actual caseload is substantially higher than the number of new filings would indicate.

Programs and Services

Access to the Courts and Legal Assistance

One of the greatest challenges facing the family division continues to be providing access to the courts for litigants without legal representation. In fiscal year 2005 (July 1, 2004 - June 30, 2005) at least one pro se litigant appeared in approximately eighty-six percent (86%) of the cases filed in the division. In fifty-seven percent (57%) of cases, both litigants were pro se.

Percentage of Pro Se Litigants by Year



Consequently, the first service often used by litigants is the **Pro Se Litigation Project**. In FY05, a total of 5,961 income qualified persons sought assistance from the project.

Educational Seminars

Protecting and nurturing children is a fundamental tenant of the family division. In FY05, eighty-one percent (81%) of the cases filed involved children in the litigation, either directly (custody, visitation, and child support cases) or indirectly (divorce). Consequently, a co-parenting education seminar (**COPE**) continues to be one of the most effective services offered. The goal of COPE is to focus parents toward the best interests of their children and away from the personal conflicts that harm those children. This revised focus creates a better home environment for children and incidentally leads to more effective disposition of cases. Sheppard Pratt Community Education Programs conducts the seminars under a contractual agreement with the Family Division.

Of a total of 859 custody, visitation and child support cases reviewed, sixty-two (62%) of the cases involved parents who had never been married. **SHAPE** (SHARED Parenting Education) seminars were introduced in 2000 to address the unique issues that arise when parents share a child but not a long-term relationship. SHAPE focuses primarily on dispute resolution skills including negotiation and collaboration and development of effective parent-to-parent and parent-to-child communication skills. A total of 1,607 individuals were scheduled to attend parenting education classes in the last year.

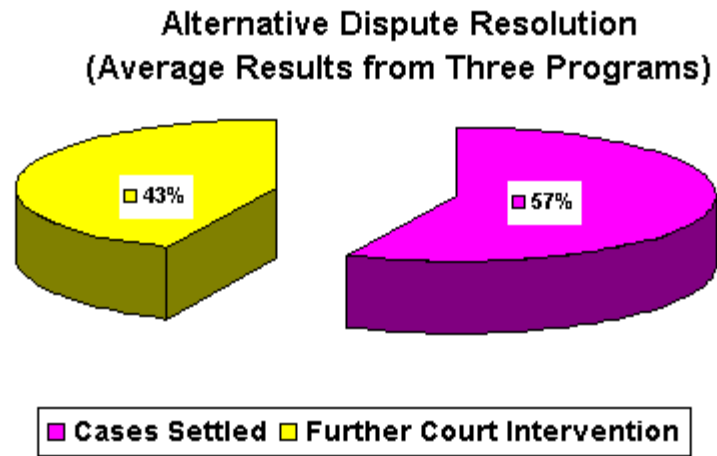
As part of the larger effort to nurture and protect children, who are involved in contested divorce cases, a psychoeducational program for children of divorce began in December of 1998 as a complement to the COPE program (**Kids COPE**). In 2000 a concomitant children's group was added to the SHAPE program (**Kids in SHAPE**). In FY05, 422 children were scheduled for the two children's groups.

Alternative Dispute Resolution Programs

The Family Mediation Service is a critical adjunct to the Division's store of services. **Mediation** facilitates the resolution of disputes beyond the courtroom; thus sparing families the acrimony that is often spawned by litigation. In addition, since mediation requires parents to participate in decision making regarding their children, it frequently fosters a spirit of cooperation that permeates future interactions. In FY05, 268 cases were ordered to mediation by the court. 191 cases were never mediated, either because the case was unsuited or because parties failed to appear for mediation. Of the cases actually mediated, eighty-three percent (83%) of the parties attended at least two sessions and reached a full agreement in sixty-six percent (66%) of the cases.

In FY05 fee waivers were granted in twenty-five percent (25%) of the cases filed in the Division. Lack of resources is frequently an issue for litigants in Baltimore City, and consequently, litigants are sometimes excluded from traditional mediation programs because of an inability to pay. Bringing mediation in-house in FY03 allowed these individuals to meet with trained volunteer mediators directly after one of the hearings in their case. The **In-House Mediation** program provides alternative dispute resolution resources to all parties and assists Judges and Masters by insuring that parties are given every possible opportunity to settle their own case without judicial intervention. At present, in-house mediation services are only available on two days a week for approximately 4 ½ hours. Despite the limited application, however, 82 cases were mediated in FY05. The parties reached a full settlement in 34 cases (41%), partial or temporary settlement in 8 cases (10%) and required further court intervention in 48 cases (59%).

One of the guiding principles of the Family Division is to promote settlement by providing numerous opportunities for litigants to address contested issues. One such forum is the **Court Ordered Settlement Conference**. Members of the Bar with demonstrated experience and interest in family law volunteer to meet with parties and their attorneys (if applicable) and attempt to arrive at a settlement or at least narrow the issues which require court intervention. Of 296 cases scheduled, 228 conferences were actually held. At the conferences, forty-six percent (64%) of the cases settled fully and fifty-four percent (54%) required further judicial intervention.



Evaluations

Judges and Masters often refer litigants to the **Medical Services** Office for a **Custody Evaluation** or **Visitation Evaluation** when custody or visitation is contested. Personnel from Medical Services interview each party and the child(ren) involved. Reports are submitted to the court, which are of great assistance to the trier of fact when determining best interests of a child or children. In FY05, approximately 70 cases were referred for custody evaluations.

Safety for Children

The **Supervised Visitation Program** was created to provide a place where non-custodial parents can interact with their child(ren) in an environment that is safe and comfortable for both parent(s) and child(ren). The program is especially valuable in cases where a parent/child bond needs to be established or reestablished. In FY05, 346 supervised visits occurred with 284 children and 418 parents making use of the program.

The **Neutral Exchange Program** is an adjunct to the Supervised Visitation Program. The exchange of children for visitation is often a volatile event, because angry and/or confrontational parents are forced to interact on a regular schedule. In the worst case, this interaction places one of the parties in physical danger (domestic violence). The **Neutral Exchange Program** provides a safe and sane place for the exchange of children for visitation. There were 221 actual exchanges in FY05, with 115 children and 244 parents utilizing the program.

The courthouse can be a frightening place for children, especially when their parents are embroiled in a prolonged and bitter struggle. The **Children's Waiting Room** provides a pleasant and safe space for children to play, read, make crafts, nap, etc. while their parents interact with the court. In FY05, 382 children were welcomed into the waiting room.

Domestic Violence

The **Domestic Violence Temporary Protective Order Project** operates pursuant to a partnership with the University of Maryland School of Social Work. Social work interns from the school commit to a field placement with the Court to provide services to parties petitioning the Court for Temporary Protective Orders. The interns are supervised by the Deputy Director of Medical Services for the Circuit Court for Baltimore City and the Domestic Violence Case Coordinator. In FY05 the court held a total of 285 Final Protective Order hearings.

Grant funding to the Women's Law Center from the Violence Against Women Act provides **free legal representation** to victims of domestic violence at Protective Order hearings. Thus, vulnerable petitioners receive skillful and affordable representation from the **Protective Order Representation Project**.

The "Family" in Family Division

The picnic for all Family Division personnel and their families has become an annual event. The picnic in FY05 was held at Druid Hill Park and approximately 150 Family Division personnel and family members attended. For the first time this year, the crabs were available at the picnic, due to extensive fund raising efforts by personnel from the Clerk's Office. Highlights included excellent food, good company, a hotly contested softball game, and karaoke.



Community Partnerships

Art in the Court

Artwork produced by Baltimore City school children enrolled in after school programs is framed and hanging in the main corridor of the Family Division. Plans are underway to hang "new" work in the corridor and reassign work presently in the corridor to courtrooms and other public spaces.

**Circuit Court for Baltimore City
Criminal Division**

**The Honorable John M. Glynn
Judge-in-Charge**

**Rafael C. Ortiz
Associate Administrator**

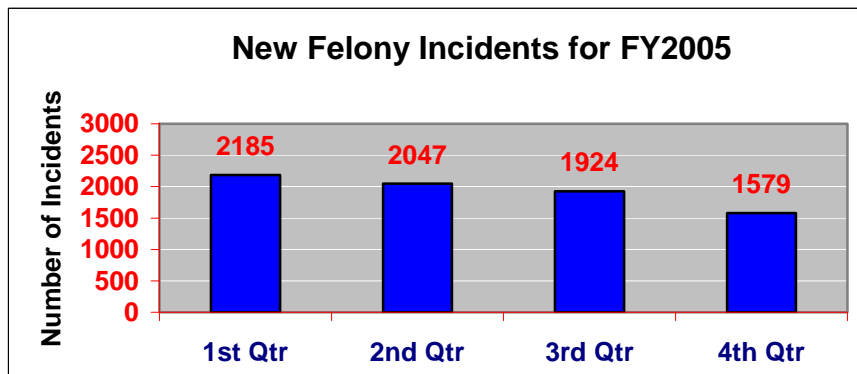
MISSION

The 8th Circuit Court's Criminal Docket is the largest docket of its type within Maryland, consisting of 2 Arraignment Courts, 3 Misdemeanor Trial Courts, 5 General Felony Trial Courts and 4 Felony Drug Courts. As such, these courts work with the Offices of the State's Attorney, the Public Defender, the Police Department, and the Private Bar to insure that unbiased, prompt and appropriate justice is dispensed for crimes committed within Baltimore. To accomplish this, our courts do not just use incarceration as the sole method to dispense justice, achieve rehabilitation and protect the public but also use other methods at their disposal. These include but are not limited to drug treatment programs, probation, and community services.

GENERAL STATISTICS

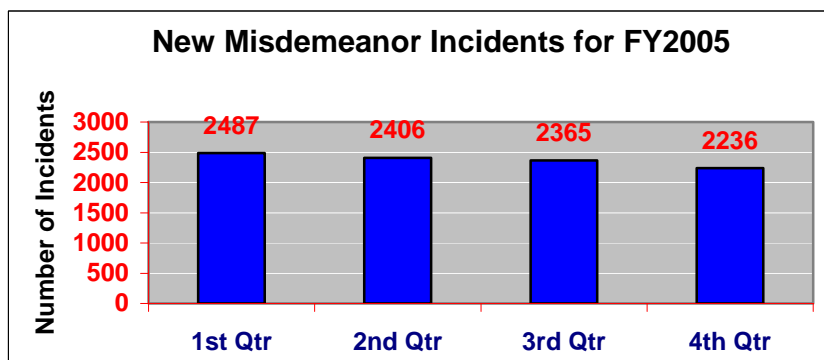
NEW FELONY INCIDENTS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2005

1 st Quarter (July 04 - Sept 04)	2185
2 nd Quarter (Oct 04 - Dec 04)	2047
3 rd Quarter (Jan 05 - Mar 05)	1924
4 th Quarter (Apr 05 - June 05)	1579
FY 2005 Grand Total	7735



NEW MISDEMEANOR INCIDENTS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2005

1 st Quarter (July 04 - Sept 04)	2487
2 nd Quarter (Oct 04 - Dec 04)	2406
3 rd Quarter (Jan 05 - Mar 05)	2365
4 th Quarter (Apr 05 - June 05)	2236
FY 2005 Grand Total	9494



CRIMINAL DOCKET WORKLOAD FY 2005

To visualize the yearly workload for the Criminal Docket, one must consider three factors: backlog as the court goes to the next year, new felony incidents and new misdemeanor/appeal incidents. This backlog coupled with the new felony and misdemeanor filings will provide the caseload or workload that the court has for a year.

For illustrative purposes, the matrix, as shown below, pulls this data together for FY 2005, using existing reports from the Judicial Information System (JIS). Now, let us also remember the definition of an "incident," a term used by JIS in their reporting and one that is used within this report. **An incident can contain one charge or multiple charges attributed to a defendant.** The State's Attorney's Office uses "tracking numbers" to correlate to incidents and "case numbers" to correlate to charges. These case numbers/cases are consolidated under a tracking number/incident. The term is applicable to both felony and non-felony data. Again, for reporting purposes we consider the use of defendants' incidents and not the number of charges or the cases. In addition each co-defendant for reporting purposes is treated as a separate incident.

When all calculations were done, **the workload for FY 2005 totaled 41,588 incidents, which is an increase of 1,962 over FY 2004 or a 5% increase in workload (1962 increase/39626 FY 2004 Workload = 5%).** For the most part in the last four years, the yearly number of newly filed incidents is equal to those closed. For example, if 1,000 new felony incidents are filed, about 1,000 are closed. However, those closed are not always the same ones filed that year. Some come from the backlog created previous years. For whatever reasons, it is the backlog number of incidents that has remained approximately 22,000 to 24,000 over the years.

CASELOAD/WORKLOAD FOR FISCAL YEAR 2005

BEGINNING BACKLOG for FISCAL YEAR 2005 (July 2004 - June 2005)

Day to Day Incidents

TYPE INCIDENTS	TOTAL # PENDING
Felony	7521
Misdemeanor	1423
Appeals	120
Post Convictions	338
Subtotal	9402

Miscellaneous Incidents

TYPE INCIDENTS	TOTAL # PENDING
Bench Warrants	11547
Inactive	73
Appeal	589
Violation of Probation	2259
Not Competent	41
Fine/Cost not paid	0
Post Conviction	448
Subtotal	14957

Grand Total/Backlog

24,359

New Felony Incidents FY 2005

Assigned 7735

New Misdemeanor Incidents FY 2005

Filed 9494

Total New Caseload/Workload for FY 2005

Assigned/Filed

17,229

TOTAL CASELOAD/WORKLOAD FOR 2005:

41,588



Please note that when comparing the total **NEW** felony and misdemeanors in this report to the numbers previously used in the earlier bar graph that also deals with **NEW** felony and misdemeanors filed, the numbers are identical.

NEW INITIATIVES FOR THE CRIMINAL DOCKET – FY 2005

POWERPOINT PRESENTATION OF THE CRIMINAL DOCKET. A PowerPoint presentation was given to inform newly assigned personnel, an overview of the Criminal Docket. It is to depict the key elements of the docket with flow charts to show the process of the felony and misdemeanor courts. Also, some of the annual trend reports for areas of interest within the Criminal Docket will be included.

ANNUAL TREND REPORTS FOR AREAS OF INTEREST WITHIN THE CRIMINAL DOCKET. The Judicial Information System (JIS) provides the court with reports via their website that take a snapshot in time (month, quarter, year, etc.) but their reports do not show trends over a given period of years. To accomplish this, the following 10 new reports were proposed and derived from existing JIS Reports. These source JIS Reports can be found on the JIS website ([Http://170.99.6.53/Jisreporting/](http://170.99.6.53/Jisreporting/)).

RPT #1 - Incidents by Case Type (Appeals, Misdemeanors and Felonies)

RPT #2 - Differential Case Management (DCM) - Felony Track Assignment At Arraignment

RPT #3 - Total Assignments and Closings by Incident Regardless of DCM Track

RPT #4 - Total Filings and Closings for Misdemeanors and Appeals

RPT #5 - Total Felony Incidents Scheduled for Trials Annually vs. Postponed

RPT #6 - Reasons for Postponed Felony Trials

RPT #7- Total Non- Felony Incidents Scheduled for Trials Annually vs. Postponed

RPT #8 - Reasons for Postponed Non-Felony Trials

RPT #9 - Disposition of Closed Felony Incidents

RPT #10 - Disposition of Closed Non-Felony Incidents

WAIVER OF GENERAL FELONIES ARRAIGNMENT. A procedure was implemented for the Circuit Court of Baltimore City to allow Defendants with General Felonies (non-drug cases) to waive the arraignment proceedings through their attorney. The policy was developed to eliminate a step in the process when it only served as a venue for scheduling a trial date. Any alternative for scheduling was worked out through the Clerk's office.

NOTICE OF VIOLATION OF PROBATION (VOP) TO THE PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE. A procedure was implemented to get notice of Violation of Probations ("VOP") to the Public Defenders early enough so they would have an opportunity to interview their clients prior to the VOP Hearing. This has not only created better services for the Defendants, but also has eliminated delays and postponements in the Court.

COLLABORATION WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCIL - JURY SERVICE. A Jury Duty Subcommittee was created to examine existing methods and make recommendations that would improve jurors' experience with jury duty. The Subcommittee solicited vendors within the area around the Circuit Court and obtained lunch discounts for jurors from 15 local area vendors. In addition, the Subcommittee was able to acquire parking discounts for the jurors at two local garages. The Subcommittee also proposed an annual Juror Awareness Week to be held the last week of January with the hope of raising community awareness as to the importance of jury duty. Furthermore, the Jury Duty Subcommittee discussed the issue that some people are called to report every year while others are never called. The Court had a specialist from the National Center for State Courts evaluate the current system. The specialist concluded that the current system is sufficient; however, the data being supplied needs to be updated on a regular basis. Individuals living in cities are more transit. As a result of the evaluation, the Court negotiated with the Department of Motor Vehicles to have data transferred into the Court's Jury System more often, opposed to only once a year.

FUTURE INITIATIVES FOR THE CRIMINAL DOCKET

AUTOMATED EMAIL NOTIFICATION PROCESS. The Baltimore City Circuit Court's Criminal Division is in need of an automated email summons program to notify SAO and Office of the Public Defender (OPD) attorneys of significant event changes with their cases. Currently, senior court staff must manually send email notifications to supervisors of the SAO on a regular basis and the summons for the OPD must be consolidated at the Criminal Assignment Office for OPD staff to pickup. For quite some time, JIS has provided no type of summons notification to the SAO. An automated system would relieve critically needed staff for other essential duties. It would also provide a receipt that critical court information was dispersed. Ideally, this system would have the ability to pull information from the JIS mainframe data to create summons that then would be automatically emailed (providing it in real time) to the designated attorneys. If the email is not acknowledged (through electronic receipt to the sender) within 10 workdays, a follow-up email would go to a designated supervisor at the SAO and OPD to help determine why the email was not opened.

RECONFIGURATION OF THE CRIMINAL DOCKET. The Judge in Charge of the Criminal Docket has proposed that the Felony Criminal Docket be reorganized so that there will no longer be General and Special Felony Trial Courts. The two Arraignment Courts would feed into two Reception Courts (East and West), which in turn would feed felony incidents into eight trial courts, four for each of the Reception Courts. Felony incidents can be pleaded at the Reception Courts or Administrative Court, where postponements are normally handled. The Administrative Judge has established a working group to explore this proposal.

AUTOMATIC TRANSFER OF DISTRICT COURT'S INSTANT JURY TRIAL PRAYER CASES TO CIRCUIT COURT. Presently, all instant jury trial prayers coming to the Circuit Court from the District Court must have the Defendants' records created from scratch. This is extremely inefficient because it could be electronically submitted by the District Court where the information is already recorded. It was proposed to have the automated records from District Court for all jury prayer cases transferred by JIS. This will save time, release manpower for other tasks, and improve the accuracy because data entry is at a minimum. JIS is presently working on this proposal.

WITNESSES/DEFENDANTS ADDRESSES IN THE JIS DATABASE. During a July 2005 Criminal Case Management Committee Meeting, a major problem surfaced that JIS can resolve. The JIS database contains numerous addresses for witnesses and defendants in its "related persons" section (section PF6). In many cases, witnesses/defendants have more than one address. It is not practical to send out notifications to all of the addresses listed. JIS was asked to adjust their program to only use the latest address entered in PF6 Section for notification of witnesses and defendants. This will save time, effort and money on the part of the Sheriff's Office and the Clerk's Office, when it comes to delivery of the summonses.

NOTATION OF DRUG TREATMENT COURT (DTC) ON JIS MONTH-AT-A -GLANCE. A request was made to have JIS place the acronym DTC (Drug Treatment Court) onto the days within JIS Month-at-a-Glance for the Arraignment Court Judge who presides over DTC. This way there is no confusion, when one looks on the date in question, as to the fact that DTC is being conducted on that date (Mondays and Tuesdays). Right now, when individuals look at Month-at-a-Glance mistakes are periodically made because the DTC dates cannot be distinguished and the cases are often counted as arraignments. This would eliminate confusion and show an accurate account of those days.

AUTOMATIC TRACKING SYSTEM FOR DEFENDANT FILES. There is a need to track the Court's defendant files when they go from one party to another within our courts to avoid key documents from being lost. There is existing software that can be used to track defendant files that are released from the File Room. Two websites that could be utilized for this project are:

- http://thefileguy.com/filingsoftware/file_tracking_software.shtml
- <http://www.ims-ontheweb.com/products.html#software>

**Circuit Court for Baltimore City
Family Division/Juvenile**

**The Honorable Martin P. Welch
Judge-in-Charge**

**A. Dale Hendrick
Associate Administrator, Juvenile**

MISSION

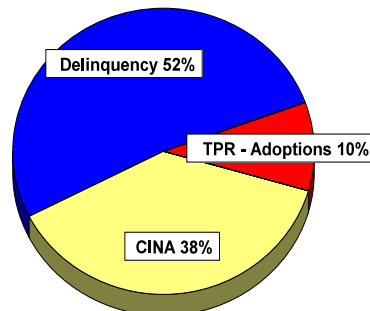
The mission of the Family Division - Juvenile ("Juvenile Court") is to provide the forum, personnel and facilities required for the fair, impartial and efficient administration of justice in all applicable areas of juvenile law. This includes providing courteous, sensitive and effective services to enhance the likelihood of rehabilitation and behavior reform of delinquent children within a sound framework of public safety, and to promote the healing and recovery of abused and neglected children, and to promote permanency for children who have languished in foster care through making them available for adoption.

GENERAL STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

The Juvenile Court is a court of limited jurisdiction with responsibility for delinquency, child welfare (Children in Need of Assistance- CINA), and guardianship (Termination of Parental Rights - TPR and Adoption) cases. The Juvenile Court is staffed by three full-time Judges and nine full-time Masters and continues to be the busiest in this state.

Of the 10,124 juvenile arrests during fiscal year 2005, approximately 34% involved drug related offenses; 18% involved assaults, and 7% involved stolen automobiles. Approximately 76% of all juveniles arrested were released to a parent or guardian; 19% were detained; and the remaining 5% were placed in a form of shelter care or released to the Department of Social Services. Data as to the sex, race and age of all juvenile arrests reveals that 84% were males; 93% were black; and 50% were either 16 or 17 years old. This data is almost identical to that of the prior fiscal year.

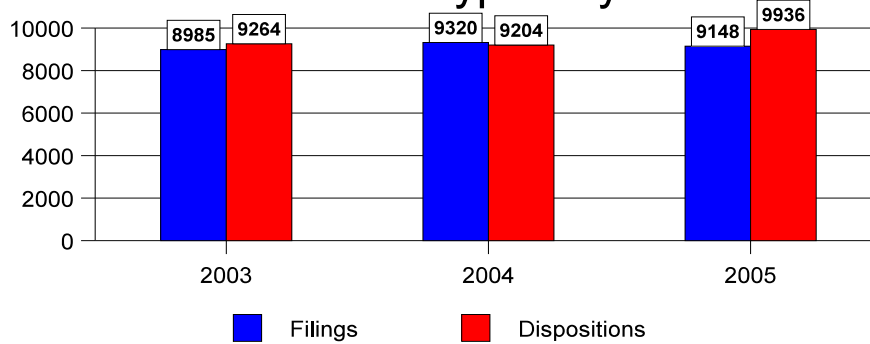
Percentage of Hearings by Case Type



During fiscal year 2005, the court held 72,532 hearings. Delinquency hearings accounted for 52% of the total, child welfare (CINA) hearings accounted for 38% of the total and guardianship (TPR-Adoption) hearings represented 10% of the total. There were 9,148 new petitions filed during fiscal year 2005. New filings consisted of 6,560 delinquency petitions, 1,904 CINA petitions, 381 TPR petitions, and 303 adoption petitions. This is approximately a 2% decrease in total filings from the prior year. Juvenile arrests for the period exceed new delinquency filings by about 35%. The reason for the difference is that some cases are not formally charged by the State's Attorney Office and others are diverted at intake to Department of Juvenile Services programs, thereby eliminating the need for formal court involvement.

During the same period, the Juvenile Court disposed of 9,936 cases. This is almost a 8% increase in total dispositions from the prior year. Dispositions included 7,418 delinquency cases, 1,879 CINA cases, 313 TPR cases and the granting of 326 adoptions. Total dispositions for fiscal year 2005 exceeded new case filings by 788 cases, resulting in a disposition to filing rate of 109%. In addition, the most recent case standard review indicated that 92% of the Juvenile Court delinquency cases were closed within the State standard of 90 days. The Juvenile Court continues its' efforts to work as diligently and productively as possible to process cases in a timely manner and to attempt to dispose of as many cases each year as are filed.

Filings and Dispositions Comparison For All Case Types By Year



PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

As a result of collaborative efforts of the various court-related agencies and certain community based programs, the children and families appearing before the court continue to be provided access to treatment services and resources to address the cycles of delinquent behavior, abuse and neglect. Many of these collaborative efforts are coordinated by the Office of Juvenile Court Services. The primary goal of the Office of Juvenile Court Services is to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness of the Juvenile Court in addressing the mental health and community-based resource needs of children and their families. More than 1,200 children and families were served by the following programs during fiscal year 2005.

- **LINKS**

Links is a partnership between Baltimore Mental Health Systems (BMHS) and the Juvenile Court that refers individuals to mentoring, after school, family preservation, and alternative and special education programs. In addition, the program refers children to mental health services including psychiatric and outpatient therapy care.

- **Instant Paternity Lab**

The Instant Paternity Lab provides immediate on-site paternity testing at the Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center of alleged fathers, and the respective mothers and children. The purpose of the program is to expedite child welfare and TPR cases by determining relative and/or adoptive resources. During fiscal year 2005, a total of 466 paternity tests were performed. Furthermore, a Memorandum of Understanding has been established with the Domestic Division of the Circuit Court to test as many as 100 individuals for that division.

- **Court Appointed Special Advocates Program (CASA)**

CASA provides a voice for children who are maltreated and involved in the juvenile justice system. This goal is accomplished through the recruitment, training, support and supervision of volunteers who are appointed by the Court to advocate for the best interest of the child. CASA volunteers do the homework and legwork to ensure these children's needs are met, and that safe, permanent homes for them are found. A total of 118 CASA volunteers served 216 children in need of assistance during fiscal year 2005; a 19% increase in children served over the prior fiscal year.

- **Juvenile Drug Court**

Substance abusing youth that are arrested, charged, and found delinquent of a non-violent juvenile offense are eligible for participation in the Juvenile Drug Court. The program merges graduated sanctions and drug treatment services to provide youth and their families with the information, education and guidance necessary to become substance and delinquency free. During the 2005 fiscal year a total of 48 new participants entered the program and there were 23 graduates. There are approximately 150 current active participants in the program. All participants are African American with an average age of 16 years old.

- **Partnership for Learning (PFL)**

PFL provides weekly tutoring and mentoring services to first-time juvenile offenders with reading difficulties who have been identified as willing candidates that could benefit from the program. The mission is to prevent future incidents of delinquent behavior by these youth by improving their reading and comprehension skills and re-engaging them in educational and vocational opportunities. PFL maintains approximately 30 active youth in the program at any given time and served more than 75 youth during the 2005 fiscal year. Approximately 98% of all program participants are African-American with an average age of 13 years old.

- **Child-Centered Permanency Mediation Program**

The primary purpose of this program is to facilitate the termination of parental rights process through the use of mediation, thereby empowering families and engaging in a cooperative process instead of an adversarial one. In this voluntary process, specially trained mediators provided by Adoptions Together, work with the birth parents and prospective adoptive parents to develop post-adoption contract agreements. When successful, these mediated agreements allow children to be adopted more expediently, as well as maintain their relationships with significant biological relatives following their adoptions. Of the 48 referrals made during the 2005 fiscal year, 19 cases were successfully mediated. Unsuccessful mediations are generally the result of the parties inability to enter into a written agreement.

- **Children's Reading and Activity Rooms**

These rooms in the Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center offer a cheerful and supervised haven for children, ages 2-12, and their care givers, while they await hearings as witnesses to, or victims of delinquency and child abuse or neglect. The rooms are fully stocked with either books, toys, puzzles or games, and provides a welcome respite for the thousands of children that visit each year.



- **Juvenile Court Early Intervention Program**

This program, located in the Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center and funded through Baltimore Substance Abuse Systems, Inc, provides for quick drug screening via urinalysis, substance abuse assessments, and referral of court involved families to a variety of drug treatment services. The primary concept of the program is to provide swift intervention to high risk youth, and parents/guardians with alleged substance abuse issues.

- **Juvenile Court Medical Services**

The primary objective of this service is to conduct mental health evaluations and to provide the Juvenile Court with clinical recommendations in a time frame consistent with the upcoming court date. Additional objectives include assessing and facilitating acute psychiatric care hospitalization for children and training the Juvenile Court Judiciary in mental health issues when requested by the Court.

- **Juvenile Court Educational Liaison**

The Juvenile Court Educational Liaison, located at the Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center, is an advocate for students who are experiencing issues and problems that need to be addressed at the school level. Services provided include providing necessary assistance regarding special education, attendance, enrollment, placement, supervision, and health issues. For those students referred during the 2005 fiscal year, approximately 12% are in Elementary School, 46% are in Middle School, and 42% are in High School.

NEW INITIATIVES

Several new initiatives to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Juvenile Court were developed and implemented during the 2005 fiscal year. These new initiatives are as follows:

- Entered into a collaborative effort with the Drug Treatment Court Commission, Department of Juvenile Services, Bureau of Governmental Research and the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Administration to streamline the juvenile drug court database to better track client and program performance while maintaining confidentiality of drug court participants in compliance with applicable laws.
- Setting of a mandatory 21-day adjudication date for all detained respondents charged with a drug related offense. The Baltimore Police Department completes the chemical analysis for these cases within five business days of the arrest. Case settlement conferences are scheduled in an attempt to reach a plea agreement. Process generally results in a reduction of the length of stay in detention and in case processing time.
- Established and implemented an Immediate Charging Unit, staffed by a second shift of Assistant State's Attorneys at Central Intake at the Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center. This unit works from noon to midnight, five days a week, to provide for immediate reviews of arrests, consultations with arresting authorities, decisions as to charging juveniles with specific offenses, and on-line preparation of petitions to forward to the Court. In addition, a Clerk's Office employee is available until approximately 9:00pm to schedule arraignments and serve the respondents and parents with a summons to appear in court. The result of those cases processed through the Immediate Charging Unit reveal a failure-to-appear rate of less than 3%.
- Established and implemented a Call Notification Unit in the Clerk's Office, four days a week until 9:00 pm, to telephone and remind respondents and their parents of scheduled hearing dates and times. This effort, in collaboration with the efforts of the State's Attorney Office to notify victims and witnesses just prior to the scheduled hearing has substantially improved the appearance rate of individuals at the court hearings.
- Generation of electronic summons/notices to the e-mail accounts of the appropriate Baltimore Police Department Officers and their District Commanding Officer, reminding the arresting officer of their scheduled court dates. Notices are sent 30 days prior to the scheduled hearings, thereby providing sufficient time for the police officers to work out scheduling conflicts.
- Implemented a Risk Assessment Instrument (RAI), administered to juveniles at Intake, to assess the degree of risk presented by the juveniles as to whether they should initially be released to a parent or a guardian, assigned to a community-based alternative program, or sent straight to detention until their first court date.
- Established and implemented a Court - Family Conference pilot program for CINA cases to discuss case service plans and review the progress of the case. The Court - Family Conference is an off-the-record, post adjudication/disposition conference held 120 days after the disposition hearing and is chaired by both the Court's Permanency Planning Liaison and the Department of Social Services-Court Liaison.
- Established a partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation as a Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) replication site, to demonstrate that jurisdictions can establish more effective and efficient systems to accomplish the purposes of juvenile detention, decrease delinquency case processing times, and reduce disproportionate minority confinement. Committees were established to develop protocols, policies and procedures to confer, share information and to promote accountability. Efforts concentrated on developing and implementing solutions to eliminate the inappropriate or unnecessary use of secure detention; minimize failures to appear and the incidence of delinquent behavior; establish responsible alternatives to detention; improve conditions of confinement; and identify and redress ethnic and other disparities in detention practices.

FUTURE INITIATIVES

Future initiatives already being developed for implementation during fiscal year 2006 include the following:

- Implementation of a CINA/TPR Model Court Project through the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. The Model Court project will utilize “best practices” in meeting case processing standards, permanency planning, reasonable efforts determinations and assuring better outcomes for abused and neglected children.
- Increased use of “case consolidation” to include if a juvenile is arrested on a new charge and already has a pending court date from a previous charge, the pending court date will be brought to the attention of the Assistant State’s Attorney and Assistant Public Defender for the purposes of consolidating the hearings.
- Establishment of a Court Medical Evaluation Team at the Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center for the purpose of expediting clinical evaluations.
- Implementation of a Family Recovery Program (FRP) for substance abusing parents of children in need of assistance that will either accelerate reunification with the child or assist the court in establishing other permanency options for the child. The Family Recovery Program should reduce the length of stay in foster care for FRP participant children, reduce substance abuse among FRP participant parents, and will engage in inter-agency collaboration and coordination between the program partners to assist with maintaining healthy families and providing safe and permanent placements for children.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

On May 23, 2005 the Juvenile Court implemented a revised and enhanced version of the QUEST Case Management System. QUEST is an integrated, computerized system that links various disciplines in the juvenile justice system enabling personnel to track all activity related to a case, and allows for the automation of documents including petitions and the in-court generation of orders.

The enhanced version of QUEST is a graphical application that has catapulted the Juvenile Court into the forefront of case management technology by providing a cutting-edge web-based system from which to access and process the caseload as well as providing a direct link to the Juvenile Court Web-site. In addition, numerous levels of security were incorporated in the design and development of the system to make it as safe and restricted as possible. The system affords appropriate individuals and agencies with controlled and immediate access to a wealth of case-specific information thereby promoting a united and effective approach to case management



ADMINISTRATION

Courthouse Renovation/Construction

In our last annual report, we noted that the final report of the Courthouse Needs Assessment had been issued and that a study was underway for site locations as well as economic impact analysis. The site analysis/economic impact was completed in October, 2003. That report identified six (6) possible sites in the downtown area for a new criminal courthouse. It also pointed out that although the court is not a revenue generating site, there would be some economic impact if the courthouse were moved out of the downtown area. The economic benefits cited were monies expended by not only employees of the court but also jurors on parking, meals, and other miscellaneous items purchased at various downtown businesses. The report also pointed out removing the courthouse from downtown would eliminate a civic and historic function of downtown. Both legal and non-legal businesses reported it is more convenient for them having the courthouse downtown. Two (2) sites were identified as the most likely for a new Criminal Courts building and, of course, the court has made known its favorite of the two. One site is the site of the Old Southern Hotel on Light Street between Baltimore and Redwood, and the other is now a parking lot behind the Munsey Building and with a wrap-around on Baltimore Street to Calvert. The latter site would be the closest proximity to the Mitchell Courthouse and to Courthouse East which would become a Government Office Building. The report pointed out that keeping the downtown location lowers cost to the public that must come to court because of the many types of public transportation available here. Our site would benefit employees and jurors who are used to the bus stops and would save them extra steps in getting to the Court. It would be the most convenient and logical site in the Court's mind.

Since the site analysis and economic impact study has been completed, the court, with a small team of volunteers from the Courthouse Task Force, has been garnering support for the scenario recommended in the Needs Assessment Report by visiting various business leaders, business and government organizations, and legislators. All who hear our story agree that Baltimore City is in need of a new Criminal Courthouse and that the Mitchell Courthouse needs major renovation. The issue is, of course, the funding of this project. The Court has received a substantial boost in support from the Maryland State Bar Association which has convened a committee to assist us with formulating legislation and promoting the construction of the Circuit Courthouse in Baltimore City. That committee held its first meeting in September, 2005 and is hard at work formulating legislation and other plans for the 2006 legislative session.

The employees of the Circuit Court belonging to the AFSCME Local No. 3674 have also assisted in our quest for a courthouse by pointing out various health and safety concerns at various times throughout the year, most recently culminating in a hearing before City Council. It is the court's hope that, in addition to the attention paid to the complaints of employees, and the various stories about problems with the buildings in the media, our efforts in educating our legislators and government officials will lead to the Courthouse Project being placed in the State's five year capitol budget plan in the near future.

Wireless Capability

Through cooperative agreement with a wireless company, and at no cost to the Court or any government entity, both the Mitchell Courthouse and Courthouse East now have wireless capability. That means that lawyers and others who find it necessary (and are approved by the Court) may bring in wireless laptops and avail themselves of a service that will allow them to connect to their e-mails at their office, to various files, and to the internet to do legal research while they are in Court. The ability to do legal research while in trial or in front of the Judge greatly assists the Court because it saves time and saves the Court from granting continuances to allow for argument and preparation on particular issues. In the past the lawyer would have to go back to his office, now he only need go to his laptop and to a research service. The wireless capability also assists in various presentations to the Bench and in areas of the Courthouse where having wired computer services is not feasible. This is just another example of the Circuit Court for Baltimore City coming of age in the 21st Century.

Accessibility Project

Since our last report, all construction has been completed to make the Mitchell Courthouse and Courthouse East accessible to disabled individuals. We are awaiting a final walk through but are confident that the plans have been followed and that all furniture, signage, doors and ramps are in place. We also have already successfully used on a number of occasions the assisted listening devices.

Information Technology

Thanks to our IT Department led by Mr. Neil B. Moores, we have continued to upgrade our website and upgrade judges and other personnel's computers. A new feature recently added to our website is a free link to translation services for many languages to allow our citizens of different cultures to get an overview of our Court and its services. We notify them (in their language) that for more detailed information and for answers to questions, they should, of course, seek additional assistance. We have also moved forward with the assistance of the Courthouse and Law Museum Foundation in procuring bids for portable document/evidence presentation systems to be used in each courthouse. This will allow attorneys to present evidence in a more clear and efficient manner to the jury without bringing in multitudes of equipment that may not be compatible with our old buildings' electrical systems. In the meantime however, Mr. Moores and his assistant have undertaken the task of reviewing all requests to bring in document/evidence presentation equipment to ensure that it is compatible with the courts' electrical systems and that it is set up in a proper and efficient manner so that the Court may proceed with its trial and hearing as scheduled. Thanks to our IT Department, look for this Term of Court Report on our website at www.baltocts.state.md.us

NEW ADMINISTRATIVE INITIATIVES

Jury Improvements

Judge in Charge of the Petit Jury has changed and it is now Judge John Themelis who has presided over continual updating of juror information. In order to assess the effectiveness of our Jury Selection Plan, we engaged a consultant to answer to the age old question of why some people are called more than once a year and why others are never called. The jury consultant has almost completed his work and has given us some suggestions on increasing the jury pool. We will be making changes to our Jury Selection Plan in the near future to gain additional names from other listings of our citizens and to change the way jurors are placed in the pool. We will also be looking to remedy such hindrances to jury selection as duplications and changes of address. In addition to giving juror notification in English, as noted in the previous section the website now gives the opportunity for persons requiring Spanish or other languages to read their jury notification and other information on the website.

In addition to the Juror Awareness Week in January, cosponsored with the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, the Court participated in the Judiciary's statewide Juror Appreciation Week in May in recognition of this year's Law Day theme on the jury system. In addition to recognizing individual jurors, this Court selected businesses who consistently allow their employees to serve on juries at no cost to the employee, to be honored in a statewide ceremony in Annapolis. Three (3) of our employers received that recognition from the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals.

Thanks to the Clerk's Office, the Jury Assembly waiting areas received new, more comfortable chairs. The plans for the expansion of the jury assembly areas have been drawn up and are underway.

Case Management Study

The Court is always seeking ways to increase its efficiency in all dockets. While we are first in some categories in the State and the second in others in our Civil Division, our other divisions lag behind in statewide comparison with respect to time standards. In order to examine the reasons for this and to make strategic plans, the Court engaged consultants to come to our Court and look at our dockets in isolation from the other jurisdictions. The final report has yet to be submitted; however, we have preliminary findings upon which we will be building, especially in the Criminal Docket. Among the suggestions are plans to change the Criminal Docket to include two (2) Arraignment Courts, two (2) Reception Courts, and the rest of the Courts (approximately 8) to be trial courts only. Opening up more trial courts will help us to get major cases tried and to close cases sooner. We are also looking at changing the length of rotation for our judges in all dockets and the time or year in which our term begins to make it more in line with either the fiscal or calendar year.

Court Reporting

For some time now Baltimore City has been the only jurisdiction in the State with video court reporting. Other jurisdictions have upgraded to digital audio recording and at least one to video; and now, thanks to a grant from the Administrative Office of the Courts, our Court will be able to upgrade our video recording to digital video/audio recording. We are in the process of preparing our Court, through cabling and wiring, for this transition to a much more efficient and clear system, and one that will allow storage of information in a more secure and compact manner.

New Judgeships

Thanks to Chief Judge Bell and the Maryland General Assembly, the Circuit Court for Baltimore City will add two (2) judge positions to our numbers effective July 1, 2005. As this report is being written a list of potential jurists has been sent to the Governor and we are anxiously awaiting the increase in our number to 32 judges in the very near future. This addition of judges, of course, made us look at our facilities again. Thanks to the City increasing our budget, we have been able to renovate two (2) courtrooms that had not been used on a regular basis for some time - 203 Mitchell and 420 Mitchell. Renovations are underway and two very nice, new chambers and courtrooms should be ready for two judges before the end of 2005.