

# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT



Fairfield County Common Pleas Court  
*General Division*

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THE HONORABLE  
RICHARD E. BERENS



THE HONORABLE  
DAVID A. TRIMMER

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# JURISDICTION

The Common Pleas Court, General Division, has exclusive jurisdiction over all felony criminal cases and in civil cases where the amount in controversy exceeds \$15,000. Our Court also has appellate jurisdiction over select administrative agency decisions.

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# MISSION

It is the mission of the Fairfield County Common Pleas Court to resolve disputes efficiently, administer justice fairly, and treat all who come before it with integrity and respect.

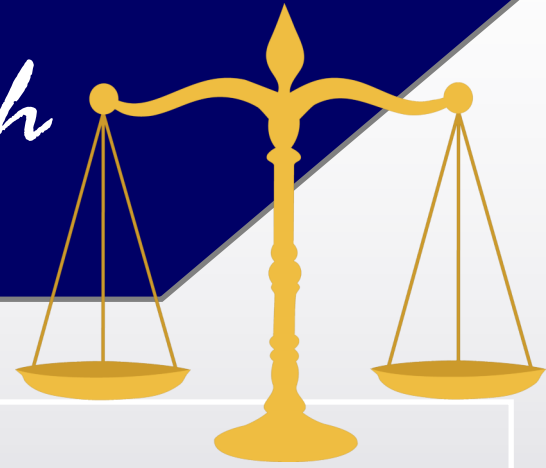
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# LOCATION

224 East Main Street • 2nd Floor • Lancaster, OH 43130



# Notes from the Bench



*"The law, for all its failings, has a noble goal: to make that little bit of life that people can control more just."*

This quote, from author Scott Turow, captures well the Court's purpose as we pause and reflect upon 2021 in our Annual Report. We look back with pride on our accomplishments in 2021, and look forward to the year ahead, with this purpose: **deliver Equal Justice Under Law.**

*Judge Richard E. Berens*

Our greatest resource is our employees. They make Court orders come to complete fruition. We are so blessed to have staff that make the workplace a fun environment while we address extreme matters of importance. I thank our staff for their incredible work ethic, support, and caring attitude, and look forward to 2022.

*Judge David A. Trimmer*



# CASE FILINGS & PERFORMANCE MEASURES

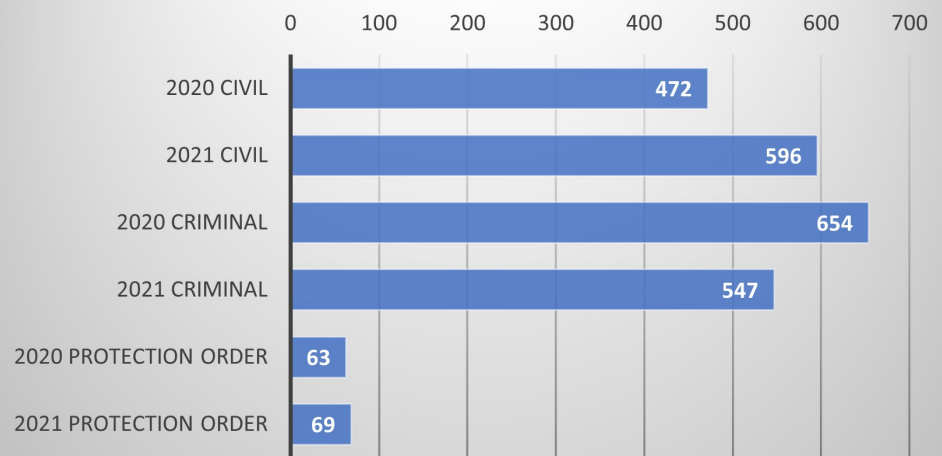
## 2021 TOTALS

CIVIL:  
607

CRIMINAL:  
562

PROTECTION ORDERS:  
69

## 2020 vs. 2021 Case Filings



Court performance can be measured in several ways, including the evaluation of the Court's clearance rate (which identifies how well the Court keeps pace with its incoming caseload) and overage rate (which identifies the percentage of cases pending past Supreme Court time guidelines). In 2021, the Court remained in line with state-wide target rates and/or state-wide averages for both of these measures.

### Combined Clearance Rate (Civil + Criminal)

- Target Rate: 100%
- Statewide Average: 102%
- Fairfield County: 107%

### Combined Overage Rate (Civil + Criminal)

- Target Rate: 10%
- Statewide Average: 18%
- Fairfield County: 14%



# 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

## STAFF TRAINING & EDUCATION

We are constantly striving to improve services and implement the most effective evidence-based practices as they relate to the justice system. That is why empowering Court and Probation staff to explore education and training opportunities remained a priority in 2021.

In August 2021, the Court utilized grant funding to provide a researched-based MAT (medically assisted treatment) training to staff, law enforcement, and other community partners. Special thanks to Moore Counseling Services for traveling to Fairfield County to share their knowledge with us.

In November 2021, employees participated in a voluntary leadership strengths initiative utilizing the research-based Clifton Strengths Assessment. With an 85% participation rate, staff members identified their leadership strengths and learned how to maximize their talents in the workplace.

Throughout the year, our Probation Department underwent training to obtain various certifications and recertifications. Specifically, 14 Officers received chemical agent, impact weapon, and taser certifications. Of those 14, 11 also obtained firearm certifications.

Also, this Fall, Officers Austin Miller and Danielle Pizzuto completed training to become CPR Instructors, whereas Officers Dan Jones and Nic Varda were certified as Gracie Survival Tactics subject control instructors.

Finally, throughout the year, all staff members were given the opportunity to participate in ethics, cyber security, sexual harassment, implicit bias, leadership, and procedural fairness educational opportunities.

*"A company's employees are its greatest asset and your people are your product."*  
- Richard Branson

## STAFF ACCOMPLISHMENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- ♦ Angel Sanderson and Kelly Starkey reached milestones of 25 years of public service.
- ♦ Austin Lines passed the Ohio Bar Exam and joined the Court as a Staff Attorney
- ♦ Sam Green transitioned from her role as an Adult Probation Officer to Reentry Coordinator
- ♦ Christina Sheets joined the Community Control Department's Pretrial Services Team.
- ♦ Sherri Mueller joined the Community Control Department's Pretrial Services Team.
- ♦ Samantha Shepherd joined the Community Control Department as an Adult Probation Officer
- ♦ Officer Dan Jones was named Assistant Chief Probation Officer
- ♦ Officer Mike Welker was named CCIS Grant Coordinator.
- ♦ Jill Boone was invited to present on the topics of Procedural Fairness & Implicit Bias on behalf of the Ohio Judicial College
- ♦ Officers Danielle Pizzuto and Austin Miller completed CPR Instructor certification training.
- ♦ Officers Austin Miller and Andrew Dreyer implemented new processes and procedures for retaining evidence, weapons, and contraband within the Department.



Court and Probation Staff on a team-building wellness hike at Alley Park

# 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

## *continued*

### HONORING JUDGE CHRIS A. MARTIN

On February 18, 2021, the Fairfield County Law Library and Fairfield County Common Pleas Court announced the dedication of The Honorable Chris A. Martin Reading Room in honor of retired Fairfield County Common Pleas Judge Chris A. Martin.



Judge Martin began his career as a public official at the Fairfield County Municipal Court, where he served as a Judge from 1995 to 2003. In 2003, Judge Martin was elected to the Common Pleas Court bench, where he continued to serve Fairfield County until his retirement in 2015. Throughout his career in public service, Judge Martin earned the reputation of being a patient, kind, and fair jurist who served his community with purpose and integrity.

“Naming part of the Fairfield County Law Library after Judge Chris Martin is such a small acknowledgement of the great person Judge Martin is. He has always stood for integrity, patience, gentleness, honesty, and fairness and has impacted to a high degree many people’s lives,” said Fairfield County Common Pleas Court David Trimmer. “Dedication of this Reading Room acknowledges his dedication to the rule of law and remind us of our responsibility as lawyers and judges to the same,” added Judge Richard Berens.

The Honorable Chris A. Martin Reading Room is available for use by attorneys, litigants, and the public. The space includes various research materials and a place for individuals to meet, prepare, read, and write.

*“Life is a lot more fragile than we think. So you should treat others in a way that leaves no regrets. Fairly, and if possible, sincerely.”*

*- Haruki Murakami*

# 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

## *continued*

### RECOVERY COURT RECEIVES INITIAL RECERTIFICATION

After a rigorous recertification process, the Supreme Court announced that Judge Berens' Drug Recovery Court met all requirements to proceed forward with the recertification process. Following an in-person observation by Ohio Supreme Court staff (scheduled for February 2022), the docket is on track to receive final certification, which will allow the Court to apply for various grant funding opportunities and offer additional resources to participants.

Special thanks to Probation Officer Wayne Moss and Counselor Lacey Carrel for their ongoing efforts in making Recovery Court the successful program that it is.

### INMATE PROGRAMMING

In 2021, the Court continued to fund, support, and implement programming for individuals incarcerated at the Fairfield County Jail. Through the Court's TCAP grant, the Court provided funding to support mental health crisis clinicians as well as cognitive behavioral and relapse prevention classes in the jail. Reentry Coordinator Sam Green has also spearheaded several additional initiatives in an effort to reduce recidivism and assist those transitioning from incarceration. These efforts include providing notebooks to inmates for therapeutic journaling, assisting inmates with benefit and housing applications, updating jail library resources, and compiling positive, rehabilitative content to be played throughout the Jail.

### NATIONAL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

In 2021, Fairfield County was one of four communities nationwide to participate in a program focused on behavioral health initiatives offered by the Council of State Governments Justice Center. This community of practice included several solution-focused conversations between stakeholders, resulting in increased collaboration, awareness, and communication among community partners. Judges, Administrators, and Probation Officers from the Court participated in these sessions, as well as representatives from the Sheriff's Office, Prosecutor's Office, Defense Bar, and New Horizons (a local treatment agency that provides mental health services in the Jail). We hope to continue these solution-yielding conversations with our community partners in 2022.





# 2021 ADULT PROBATION UPDATE

2021 has been a year of stabilization and focus for the Fairfield County Common Pleas Community Control Department. We approached the year with the theme of the “Director’s Intent”— the notion that the Director wholeheartedly understands and follows the Court’s directives *and* the rationale that underlies them. This principle has helped the Department reconnect with not only what we do, but why we do it. Therefore, we remain committed to enforcing the Terms and Conditions of Community Control as prescribed by the Fairfield County Common Pleas Court Judges, which also includes our commitment to:

- ♦ Enhance public safety
- ♦ Promote recovery and increase accountability through testing, counseling, and reporting
- ♦ Encourage, support, and effect positive change in offender behavior
- ♦ Be a role model for those we supervise
- ♦ Utilize sanctions progressively and proportionately as necessary to accomplish these goals



2021 also brought exciting new personnel additions to the Department. Christina Sheets and Sherri Mueller joined the Pre-Trial Division and Samantha Shepherd joined the Community Control Division. We are also proud of former Community Control Officer Samantha Green who has transitioned from our Department to a new role with Reentry.

Finally, we want to extend sincere gratitude to the Ohio State Highway Patrol, as they generously donated a much-needed transport vehicle to the Department this past fall.

In the coming year we hope to continue our theme of the “Director’s Intent,” further our outreach into the community, and continue searching for ways to better perform our roles.

## BY THE NUMBERS

Individuals on Probation:	1983
Individuals on Pretrial Bond:	265
Successful Terminations:	222
Treatment Referrals:	227



# 2021 REENTRY UPDATE

## WHO WE ARE

Reentry Coordinator Sam Green spearheads the Court's reentry initiatives and coordinates all reentry programming with our community partners. Prior to accepting her current position as Reentry Coordinator, Sam served as an Adult Probation Officer in Fairfield and Hocking Counties.

"I am so passionate about Reentry and the people I serve because hope is what ignites change," Sam explains. "My goal is to spark that hope within everyone I encounter and hope that it will ignite change across the world."



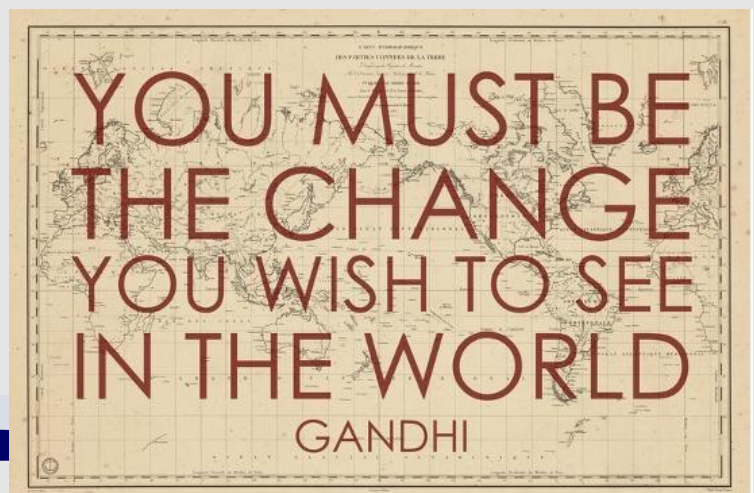
## LOOKING AHEAD

1. Increased Jail Programming: Next year, we will continue to increase the programming opportunities within the jail setting, I believe that giving people opportunity to grow in this setting is where it should begin. Spark that hope, it's powerful!
2. Safe & Affordable Housing: In 2022, we will continue to search for long-term positive solutions to our housing issues and reduce our county's homeless population
3. Community Collaboration: Moving forward, I want to expand our collective knowledge and utilization of resources available within our county. There are so many wonderful people I've met that are trying to individually make a difference: imagine the world-changing alliance we would make if we all linked together.

## WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED

Since taking over the position I have worked on making connections within the community to better serve the Reentry population. These efforts include:

- Participating in the Fairfield County Housing Coalition in hopes to address homelessness and an overall lack of affordable housing
- Conducting video "in-reach" sessions with the prisons to ensure connections are made prior to their release.
- Coordinating relapse prevention classes in the jail
- Implementing and updating technology in the jail so more individuals have access to programming while incarcerated
- Providing journals to incarcerated individuals, premised upon positive behavior
- Connecting with local groups such as ConnexionWest, Link-a-Staff, and The Numbered to assist with housing and employment opportunities
- Initiating a remote STAR aftercare program to allow for ongoing services amidst the COVID pandemic
- Creating a treatment resource guide for Judges, Magistrates, Probation Officers, and Law Enforcement to help broaden the knowledge of resource options
- Furthering the SteppingUp Initiative to better assist our mental health population needs.



# BUDGET NARRATIVE



In 2021, the Court and Community Control Department budgeted \$2,658,432 in anticipated general fund expenditures. Actual general fund expenditures for both departments totaled \$2,377,144.\* Thus, despite anticipating an additional \$78,000 in expenditures compared to 2020, **the Court managed to reduce its actual general fund expenses by \$45,624 in 2021**, thanks to fiscally conservative leadership and the strategic use of grant funds. The largest general fund expenditures for both departments in 2021 were employee salary and benefits (such as health insurance and OPERS). Court-appointed attorneys' fees, trial-related expenses (such as transcription costs and juror fees), and electronic monitoring of individuals under felony supervision continued to be three of the largest non-personnel related general fund expenditures incurred in 2021.

The Court continued to seek ways to offset these general fund expenditures through grant opportunities and special revenue funds, such as filing fees and probation supervision fees. This year, the Court applied for and/or collaborated on 5 grants, totaling over 1 million dollars in fiscal assistance to the Court and its community partners. These grant awards assisted the Court in effectively monitoring and serving individuals on bond and probation, and implementing innovative programs to increase access to justice.

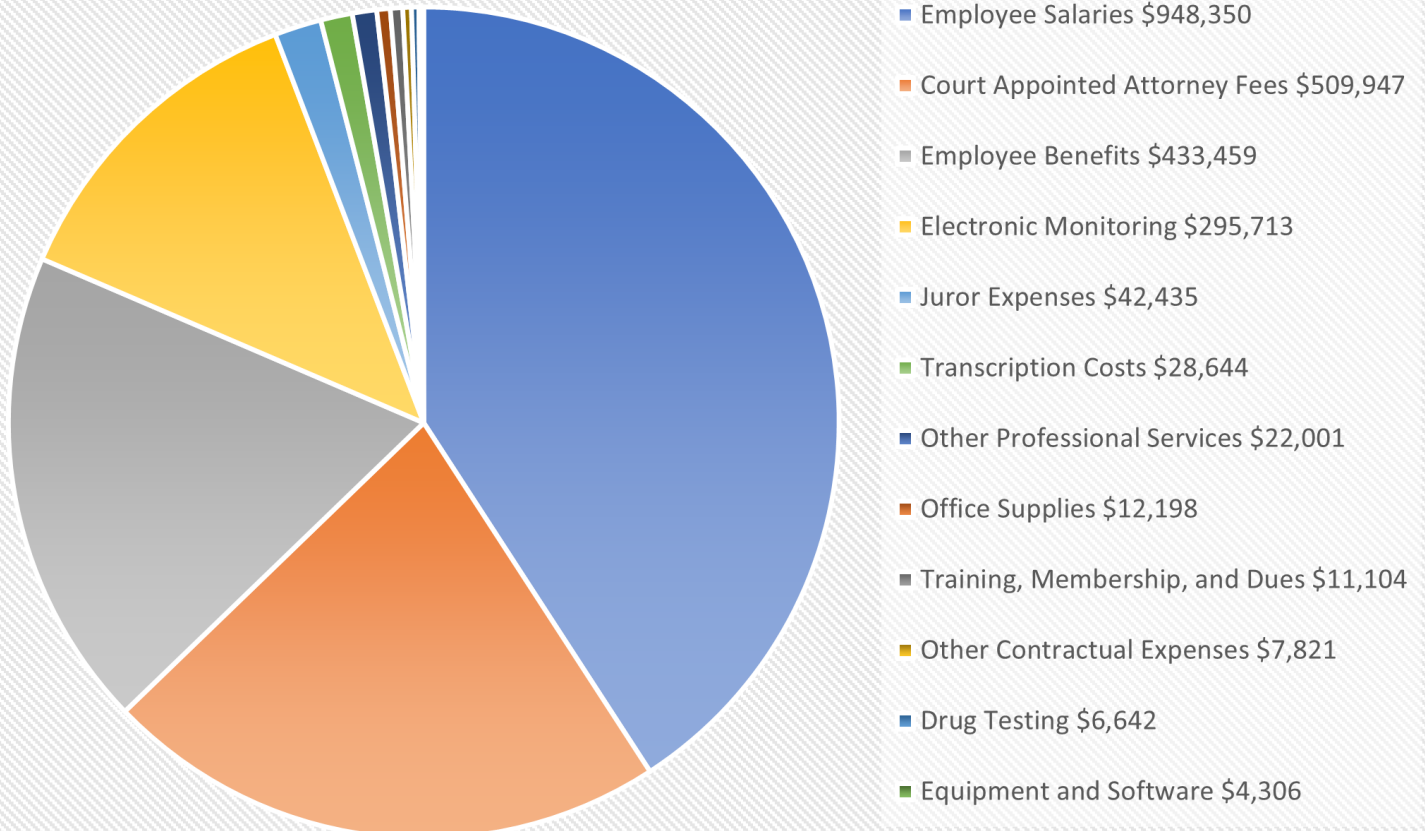
\* As of 12/22/2021



# FINANCIAL DATA:

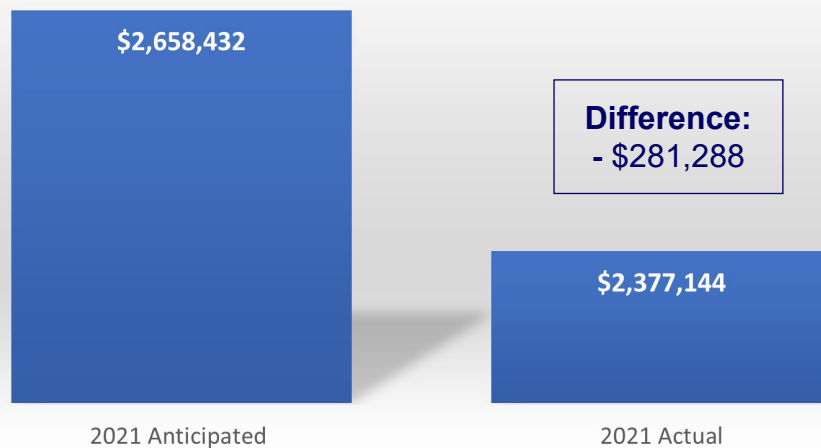
## 2021 GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES

Actual General Fund Expenditures 2021



(Line items totaling less than \$2,500 omitted from chart)

Anticipated vs. Actual Expenditures

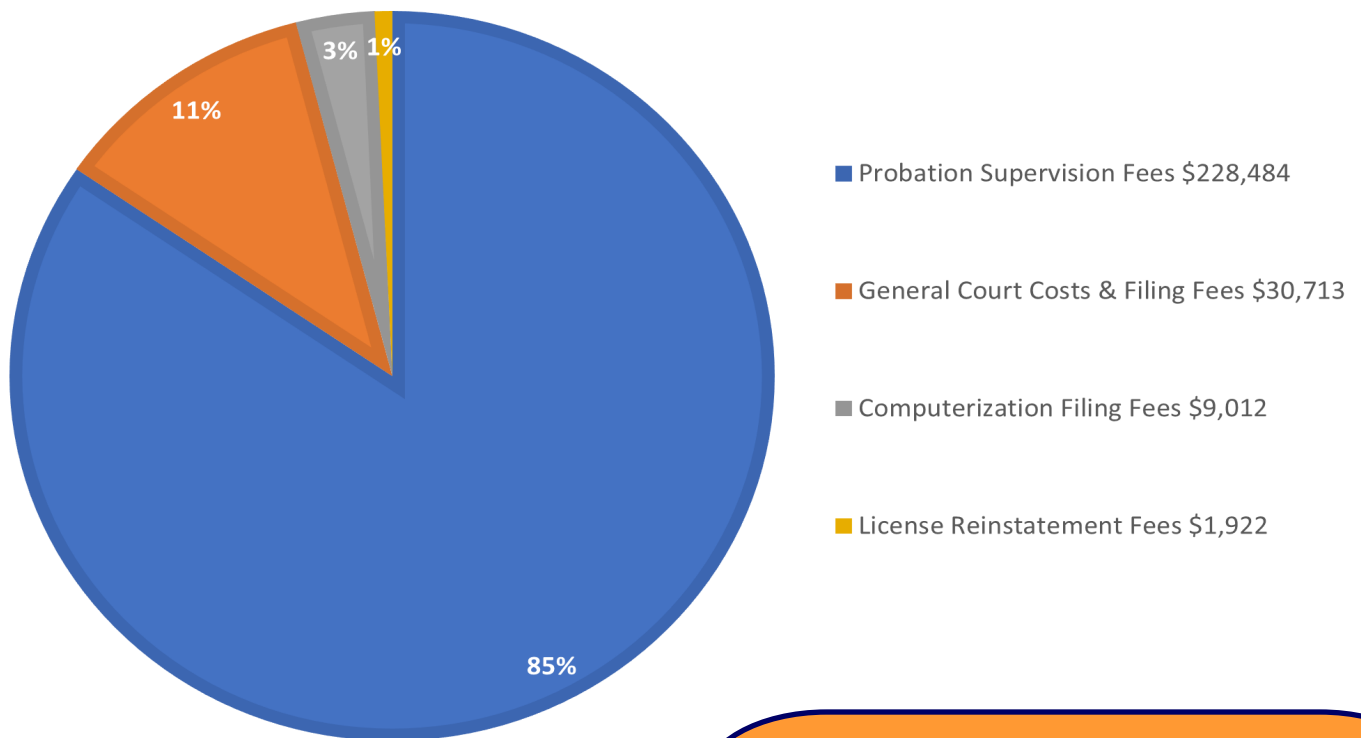




# FINANCIAL DATA: 2021 REVENUE SOURCES

In 2021, the Court brought in just over \$270,000 from various revenue sources, all of which are outlined in the graph below. The Court utilizes these revenue sources to offset general fund expenditures as well as expand and improve pretrial and probation supervision. This year, these revenue funds have been used to pay for mediation services, drug testing, Probation Officer training and equipment, improvements to the Probation Department's evidence room, and office supplies.

## 2021 REVENUES



### Fun Fact:

Both civil cases in which revenue funds were used to pay for a mediator were settled at mediation. Alternative dispute resolutions such as these save the parties, attorneys, and the civil justice system valuable time and resources.

# FINANCIAL DATA: 2021 GRANT AWARDS

**Targeted Alternatives to Prison Grant (ODRC): \$723,952 (over 2 years)**

*(collaboration with Commissioners and Sheriff to hire additional staff, provide mental health and substance abuse services in the jail and purchase equipment)*

**Intensive Supervised Probation Grant (ODRC): \$371,816 (over 2 years)**

*(funds probation officers' salaries and support services for ISP probationers)*

**Civil Justice Reform Grant (Ohio Supreme Court): \$50,000**

*(increases access to justice by providing legal assistance to qualified individuals)*

**Recovery Court Grant (OMHAS/ADAMH): \$45,000**

*(funds salary of probation staff and recovery supports for specialized docket participants)*

**Addiction Treatment Program Grant (OMHAS/ADAMH): \$110,000**

*(collaboration with ADAMH to provide wrap-around services to individuals under Court supervision with substance use disorders)*



# DIRECTORY

**Chief Probation Officer &  
Director of Community Control**

Angel Sanderson 740-652-7344

**Community Control Officers**

Dan Jones (Asst. Chief PO) 740-652-7345

Danielle Pizzuto 740-652-7348

Austin Miller 740-652-7353

Nic Varda 740-652-7454

Tim Norris 740-652-7354

Laurie Henderson 740-652-7342

Wayne Moss 740-652-7347

Michael Welker 740-652-7398

Tiffany Westhoven 740-652-7341

Mackenzi Cvetan 740-652-7453

Samantha Shepherd 740-652-7425

Katie Spires (Pretrial) 740-652-7352

Andrew Dreyer (Pretrial) 740-652-7351

Christina Sheets (Pretrial) 740-652-7346

Sherri Mueller (Pretrial) 740-652-7343

**Court Administrator & Magistrate**

Jillian Boone 740-652-7424

**Assignment Commissioners /  
Administrative Assistants**

Misty Conkle (J. Berens) 740-652-7431

Traci Dresbach (J. Berens) 740-652-7435

Kathy Hartman (J. Trimmer) 740-652-7427

Shannon Seesholtz (M. Boone) 740-652-7434

**Court Services Coordinator**

*(Jury / Transcripts / Attorney Fees)*

Kelly Starkey 740-652-7433

**Bailiffs / Staff Attorneys / Paralegals**

Austin Lines (J. Berens) 740-652-7432

Kelly Munn (J. Trimmer) 740-652-7430

**Reentry Coordinator**

Sam Green 740-652-7314

**Clerk of Courts**

(p) 740-652-7360

(f) 740-687-6701

