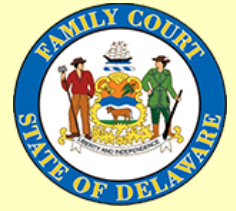


FAMILY COURT

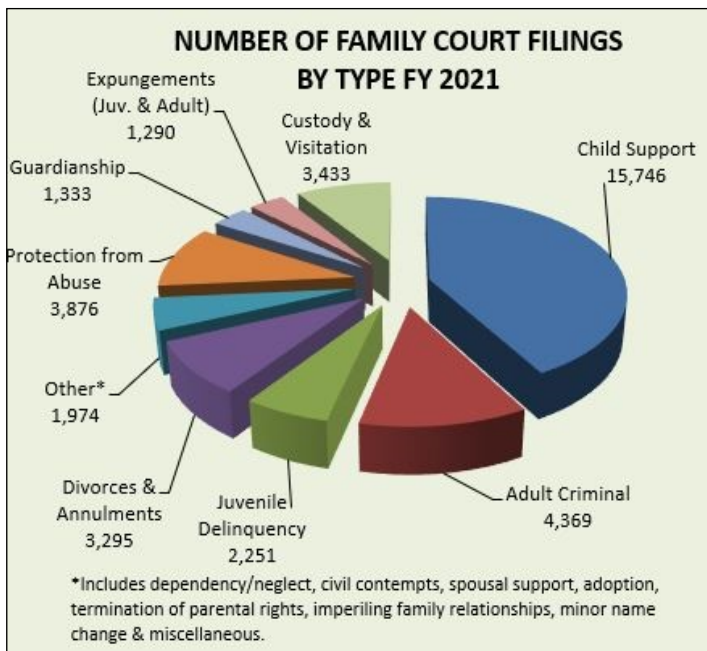
CHIEF JUDGE MICHAEL K. NEWELL



FAMILY COURT

Family Court continues to be guided by its mission: to provide equal access to justice for the families and children under its jurisdiction in a manner that is fair and efficient and that maintains the public's trust and confidence in an independent and accountable judiciary. We strive each day to build an atmosphere that ensures all members of the public are treated with courtesy, dignity, and respect.

As the Court continued to address challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, this year Family Court institutionalized many of the positive changes that were initially necessary to keep the Court running during the State of Emergency. Throughout the pandemic, Family Court continued to accept filings, hold hearings, and created innovative ways for litigants to access justice.



In Fiscal Year 2021, the Court processed 37,567 filings, a decrease of 6.9% from last year. The Court's civil filings decreased by 4.6%, and its adult criminal filings decreased by 2.9%. Juvenile delinquency filings decreased by 33.7% with juvenile misdemeanor cases dropping by over 52%. The downward trend continued among all three counties with New Castle's overall filings decreasing by 3.9%, Kent's decreasing by 7.5%, and Sus-

FAMILY COURT

FAMILY COURT CIVIL & CRIMINAL FILINGS & DISPOSITIONS BY FISCAL YEAR



sex’s decreasing by 12.8%. These decreases are attributable to the pandemic.

While child support filings continue to represent the highest volume of filings for Family Court with over 15,000 filings in Fiscal Year 2021, the Court saw a decrease of 9.6% following a decrease of 20.4% the previous fiscal year. Notably, child support arrears filings dropped by 81.7% statewide. Protection from abuse filings remained relatively stable, but divorce, custody, and new child support filings increased in every county.

Family Court completed the Court Improvement Program (“CIP”) Strategic Plan this past year, which will guide our child welfare work for the next five years. We have continued to receive technical assistance and training from the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (“NCJFCJ”) as an Implementation Site in an effort to enhance our CIP work, improve outcomes for children and families, and support our ever-evolving child welfare practices. Quality legal representation remains a focus of CIP with parent attorney standards being drafted this past fiscal year, as well as the development of a mul-

tidisciplinary approach for parent representation. The Court plans to expand the teaming of social workers with parent attorneys and will add peer advocates to the multidisciplinary team in the upcoming year.

Family Court also continues its work to sustain the efforts of the Family Court Enhancement Project. The project has focused on improving practices in domestic violence, custody, and visitation matters. Through work completed by a Domestic Violence Coordinator, Family Court has improved upon its PFA processes, case processing practices, and the overall courthouse and virtual experience for litigants. The Family Court continued the tradition of celebrating its successes and providing stakeholder updates during Domestic Violence Awareness Month with a virtual “round table” discussion. The Domestic Violence Coordinator tracked PFA firearm relinquishment and DV intervention compliance, and aided in the implementation of virtual hearings, the creation of litigant self-help materials, and the addition of self-help materials to Family Court’s website in response to COVID-19.

Continued on next page

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Family Court efforts to construct new Family Court buildings in Kent and Sussex Counties continued this fiscal year. The current buildings are under-sized, undignified, and unsafe. These projects are critical to providing Family Court and the citizens of Delaware with adequate, secure, and dignified facilities. Design of both buildings progressed this past



Architect's rendering of the proposed Sussex County Family Courthouse in Georgetown.

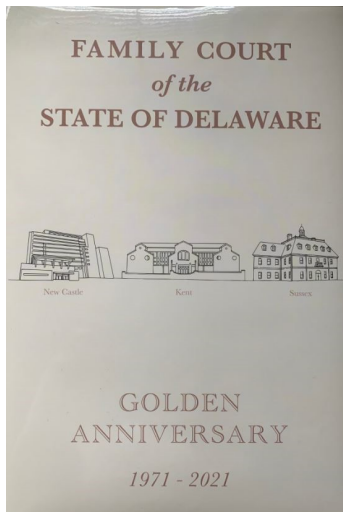
year, and it is anticipated that groundbreaking will take place in Sussex County during Fiscal Year 2022.

In January of this year, the Honorable Theresa Sedivec and the Honorable Gretchen Gilchrist were both reappointed to their second terms as Commissioners in New Castle County and Kent County, respectively. The Honorable Craig Fitzgerald was reappointed to his second term as a Commissioner in New Castle County in June of this year.

Family Court's Council on Racial Equity ("C.O.R.E.") continued its work to "eliminate systemic and institutional racism that serves as a barrier to accessing and achieving justice for litigants of color, and to promote a supportive and inclusive environment for employees that is dedicated to celebrating diversity by removing any social, cultural or other inequities that stifle professional development." Work continues at the committee level in

preparation for the submission of a report which will establish the path forward for the Family Court in this critical area of reform.

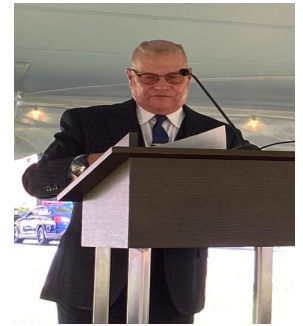
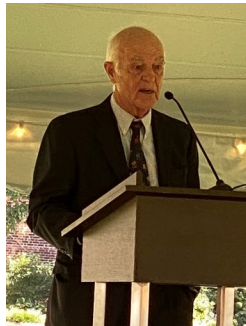
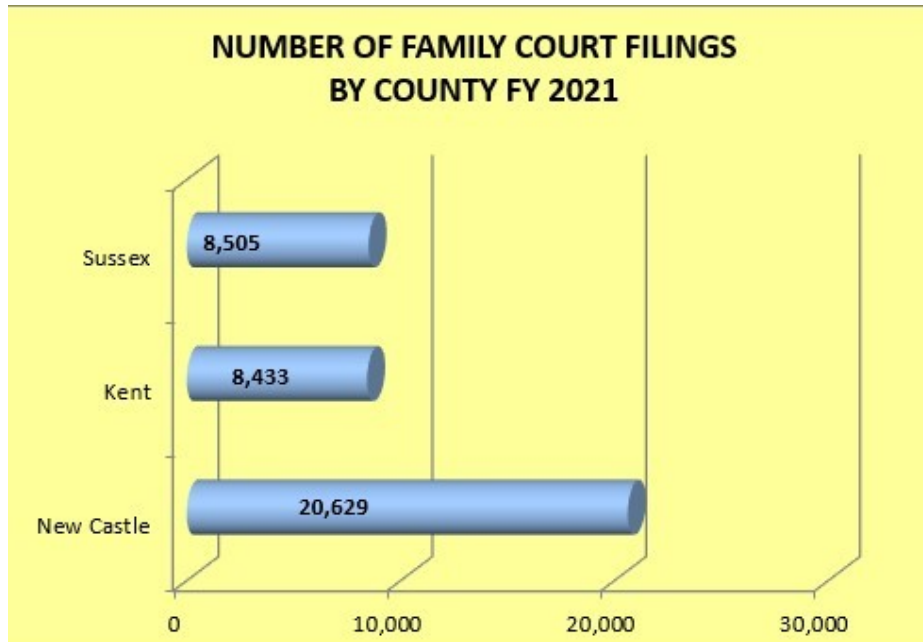
Finally, while Family Court's origins date back to 1911 with the founding of the Juvenile Court for Wilmington, on September 7, 2021, Family Court celebrated its 50th anniversary as a statewide court. A ceremony was held in Dover on Legislative Mall to commemorate the anniversary, and to recognize Family Court's historical contributions to the State. In addition to the public ceremony, the Court shared the celebration with employees with the distribution of commemorative tiles and copies of the Family Court's 50th Anniversary history book. The book was published just prior to the celebration and includes chapters written by current and past members of the bench, and family law attorneys. Complimentary copies of the book were made available to members of the bench and bar.



The Family Court's 50th Anniversary history book.

The Family Court is privileged to serve all citizens of Delaware, particularly its most vulnerable citizens, its children. The Court has a large caseload and hears some of the most intimate and sensitive issues that affect families, parents, and children. Our Judges, Commissioners, administration, and staff strive to ensure equal access to justice for our citizens and are dedicated to the Court's mission. We are proud of what we have accomplished in our court system during the past Fiscal Year and look forward to doing even more in the year ahead. ♦

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*Speakers from the 50th Anniversary of Family Court event held on the Legislative Mall in Dover, in September 2021.
Top Row (from left to right): Chief Judge Michael K. Newell; Governor John C. Carney; Chief Justice Collins J. Seitz, Jr.
Bottom Row (from left to right): Former Justice Randy J. Holland; Former Judge Jay H. Conner; Senator David P. Sokola;
Representative Krista Griffith; Delaware Public Archives Director Stephen M. Marz.*

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FAMILY COURT



FAMILY COURT JUDGES

Front Row (left to right): Judge Janell S. Ostroski; Judge Michael W. Arrington; Judge Natalie J. Haskins; Judge Paula Ryan; Judge Mark D. Buckworth; Judge Jennifer B. Ranji; Judge James G. McGiffin, Jr.

Middle Row (left to right): Judge Joelle P. Hitch; Judge Louann Vari; Judge Kenneth M. Millman.

Back Row (left to right): Judge Arlene Minus Coppadge; Judge Peter B. Jones; Chief Judge Michael K. Newell; Judge Robert B. Coonin; Judge Mardi F. Pyott.

Not Pictured: Judge Felice Glennon Kerr; Judge Mary S. Much.

FAMILY COURT



FAMILY COURT COMMISSIONERS

Front Row (left to right): Commissioner DeSales Haley; Commissioner Para K. Wolcott; Commissioner Danielle S. Blount; Commissioner Emily A. Farley; Commissioner Loretta Young; Commissioner Samantha J. Lukoff; Commissioner Craig R. Fitzgerald.

Middle Row (left to right): Commissioner Kim DeBonte; Commissioner Sonja T. Wilson; Commissioner Theresa A. Sedivec; Commissioner James J. Maxwell.

Back Row (left to right): Commissioner Jennifer Mayo; Commissioner David W. Jones; Chief Judge Michael K. Newell; Commissioner Andrew K. Southmayd; Commissioner Gretchen Gilchrist.

Not Pictured: Commissioner Francis Mieczkowski III.