

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE COURT

CHIEF MAGISTRATE ALAN G. DAVIS



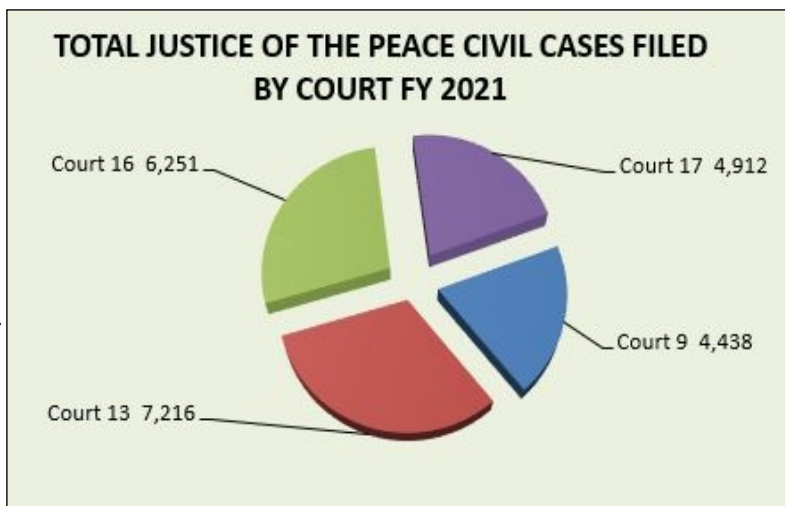
At the beginning of this past fiscal year, it was evident that the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact would last much longer than anyone could have expected. Although the Justice of the Peace Court had maintained essential operations throughout the lockdown period, vast swaths of the Court's operations were just beginning to see what the new landscape looked like. Landlord-tenant cases started to be filed again. Traffic and criminal calendars had been halted or moved to an entirely virtual platform. The Court was adjusting to the challenges and opportunities that the "new normal" presented. As a forward thinking and highly reactive organization, we have several specific achievements to tout.

different manner. We began by offering online, synchronous mediation services for these cases as a stop-gap measure, with an eye toward providing a better platform.

On November 2, 2020, our online dispute resolution (ODR) system, called MeDEate, became available for cases filed on or after July 1, 2020. This effort was one of the first uses of ODR systems to assist in the resolution of landlord-tenant cases. By November 5, 2020, 2,454 cases were uploaded into the MeDEate system. The Court notified parties to register in MeDEate, and scheduled cases for trial, pending the outcome of the mediation. The Court employed seasoned judges with mediation training and volun-

IMPLEMENTATION OF ON-LINE DISPUTE RESOLUTION SYSTEM

Mediation is not an option often thought of as compatible with the summary nature of landlord-tenant proceedings. With the restrictions put on filing and disposing of landlord-tenant matters from both state and national authorities, it was evident that we needed to approach this part of our jurisdiction in a



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teers from the Bar and beyond to serve as online mediators.

In the first step of mediation, parties could have an online, asynchronous conversation captured in the system. If that was unsuccessful, the parties could request a mediator to assist in the conversation. Finally, if the mediator thought that resolution of the case was possible, but needed a final push, an online, synchronous mediation could be scheduled. A significant number of cases were resolved using this process, many with the assistance of quick access to the DEHAP program, which provided funding for resolution of cases involving non-payment of rent.

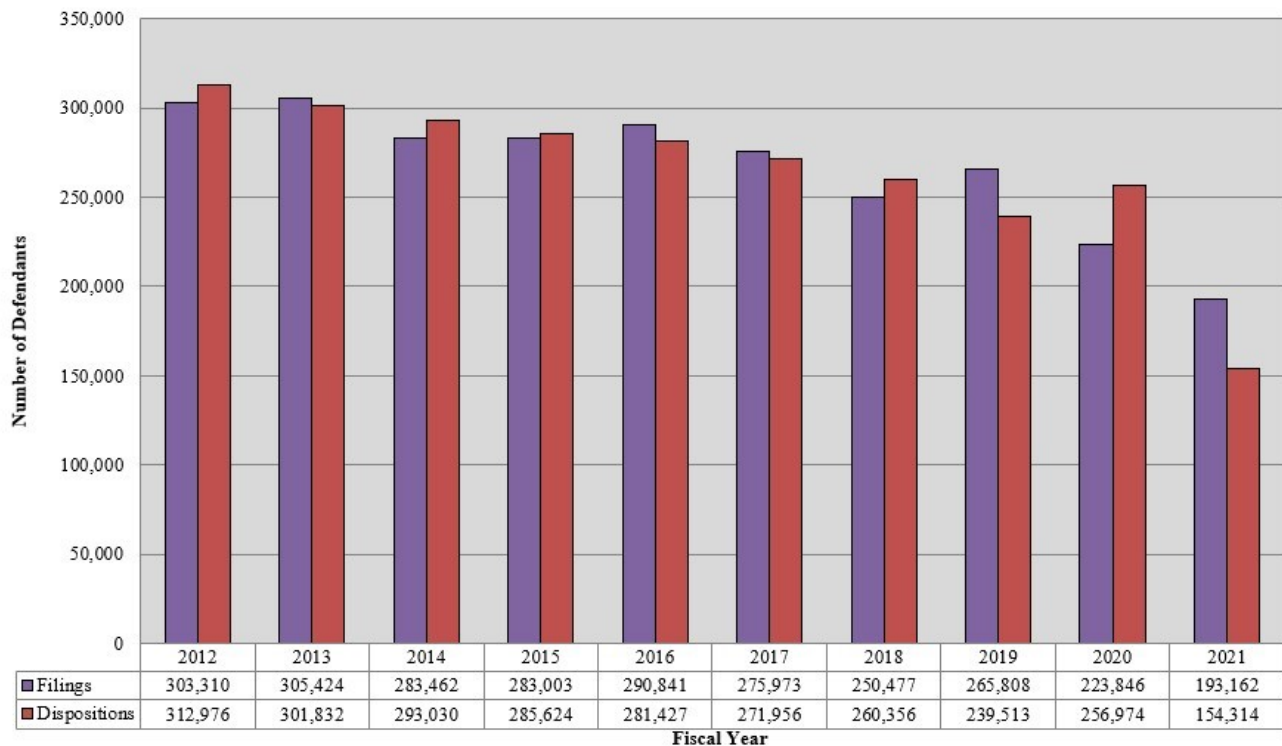
We are currently developing an expansion of the ODR system to include debt cases. Parties to a debt dispute will have the ability to utilize the Online Dispute Resolution system as a tool to assist them in reaching a resolution.

CIVIL CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM UPGRADE

The Justice of the Peace Court has been working with the Judicial Information Center (JIC) and other courts in Delaware to upgrade our civil case management system (Contexte). The implementation of the Contexte upgrade on June 13, 2021 is the culmination of over 2 years of work from our civil clerical staff, supervisors, constables, management analysts and others. Prior to the upgrade, our Court Administrator for the Justice of the Peace Court made it a priority to work with JIC to completely document, update and standardize our civil processes. These documented processes were crucial to the upgrade, as JIC and JP staff used these processes to test and vet the changes to our civil case management system prior to going live.

This upgrade included enhancements that were developed after the original implementation of Con-

Justice of the Peace Court Civil & Criminal/Traffic Filings and Dispositions by Fiscal Year*



*Criminal filings and disposition information is by defendant

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texte in 2008, changes to resolve our outstanding Java issues that affect Contexte as well as other applications that require Java; and building a new infrastructure for the system to run on to make it more safe, secure and stable. JIC also created a new Contexte Reporting application to replace our old Crystal Report model. In a coordinated effort, JIC and the JP Court also worked with our eFiling vendor to create a system maintenance upgrade.

All these changes to our CMS, eFiling and Reporting applications required our Justice of the Peace Civil staff to commit many hours of testing and documentation to ensure that all systems are functioning on the “go-live” date. As with all large projects, we had some bumps in the road, but our Court staff handled themselves with incredible poise and patience.

TRUANCY

Legislation passed in 2019 changed the jurisdiction over Truancy cases to include the participation of Family Court in the more complex matters that arise in this area of our jurisdiction. We collaborated with Family Court and other relevant stakeholders, including the Department of Justice, the Office of Defense Services, the Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services and the school districts, to develop processes and procedures for shared truancy jurisdiction. Part of that work included establishing protocols for

the transfer of juvenile contempt jurisdiction to Family Court. We were well prepared when the change in jurisdiction went into effect on August 9, 2021.

Like other areas of our jurisdiction, the Truancy Court successfully utilized Zoom for truancy hearings as we moved out of COVID-19 restrictions. Following initial challenges with individual Zoom events for each defendant for scheduled calendars, we moved to single session Zoom events for calendars, whereby one Zoom event is used for large blocks of cases scheduled at different times. This accounted for late appearances and allowed the use of the waiting room feature in Zoom. Overall, this dramatically increased our virtual hearing appearance rates.

While these accomplishments are worth singling out, the real achievement of the Justice of the Peace Court through the past fiscal year can be generally attributed to the grace, determination, skill, and resiliency of our judges, clerical staff, uniformed services personnel and administration employees. In a period when no process was unexamined and most were modified on what seemed like a daily basis, it is hard to overstate how incredibly steadfast the resolve of our workforce has been. Though much of the effort to keep this organization churning forward in uncertain times may not have been closely documented, it has not gone unnoticed. Many of those contributions

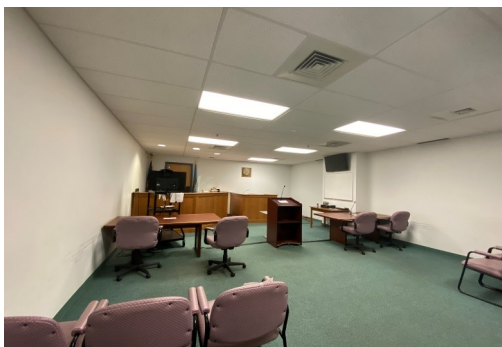
will have lasting impact, helping chart our path forward in a new, uncertain future. I am proud of each and every person who has helped this Court lead the way. ♦

CAPIASES CLEARED BY JUSTICE OF THE PEACE COURT FOR OTHER COURTS FY 2021

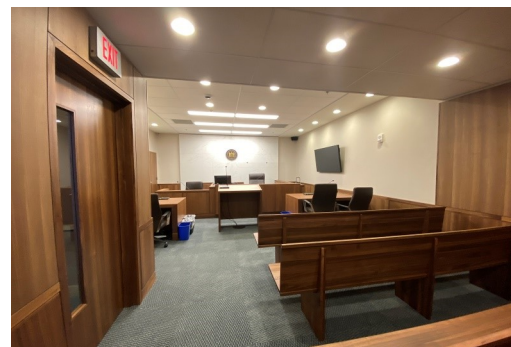


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Out with the old locations of Justice of the Peace Court 10 (Prices Corner) and 20 (Wilmington Public Safety Building), which closed in September and October 2021.



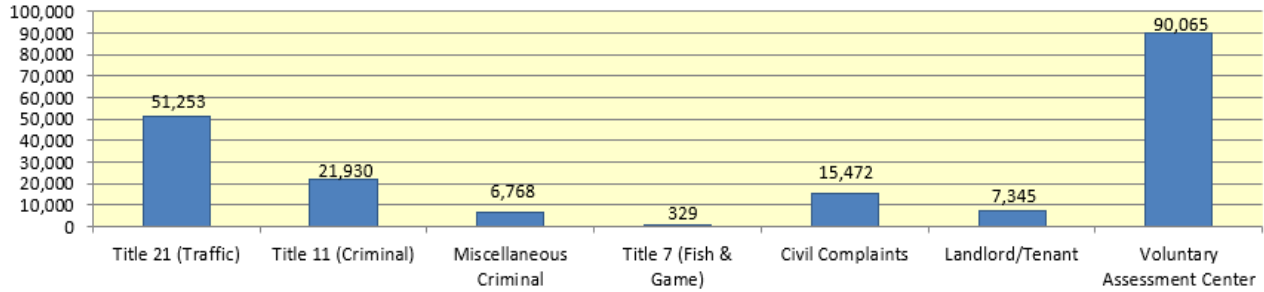
In with the new location of the combined Justice of the Peace Court 20 at the Leonard L. Williams Justice Center in October 2021.



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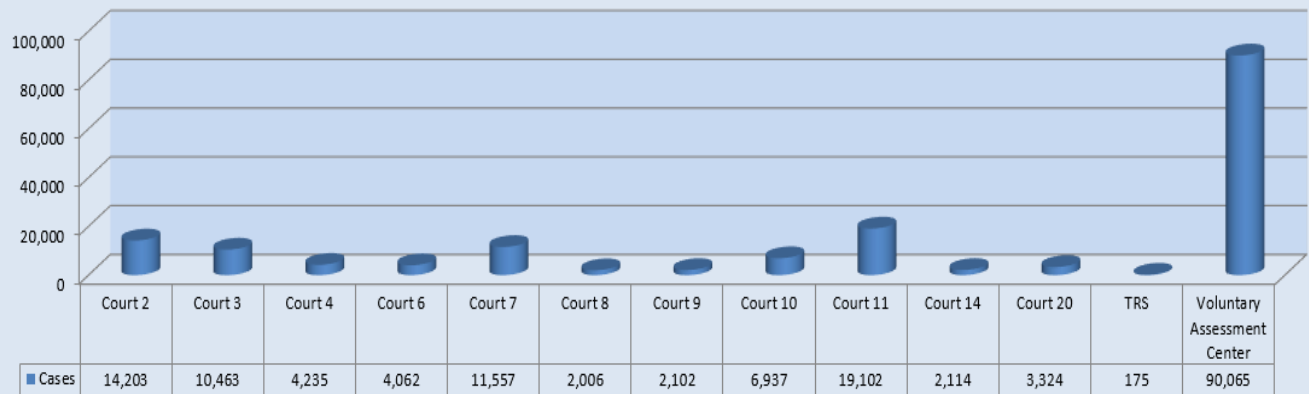
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**NUMBER OF JUSTICE OF THE PEACE COURT FILINGS* BY TYPE
FY 2021**

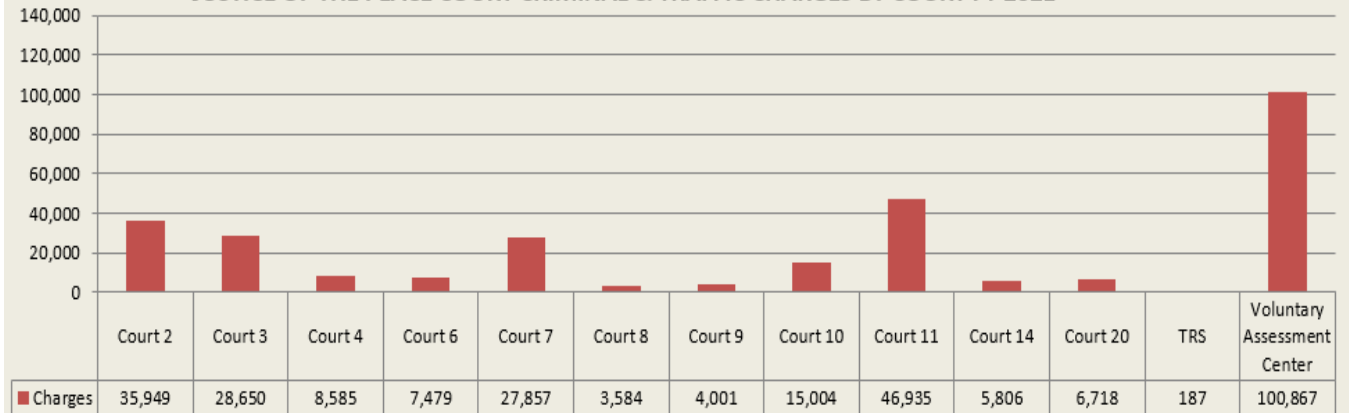


*Criminal filings are by defendant.

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE COURT CRIMINAL & TRAFFIC CASES BY DEFENDANT BY COURT FY 2021



JUSTICE OF THE PEACE COURT CRIMINAL & TRAFFIC CHARGES BY COURT FY 2021



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NEW CASTLE COUNTY JUDGES



Top Row (left to right):

Nina Bawa; Shameka Booker; Nicholas Brock; Peter Burcat; Bracy Dixon, Jr.; Shanaya Eyong.

Middle Row (left to right):

Beatrice Freel; James R. Hanby, Sr.; Bobby Hoof; Thomas M. Kenney; Kerry Kowal; Shelley Losito.

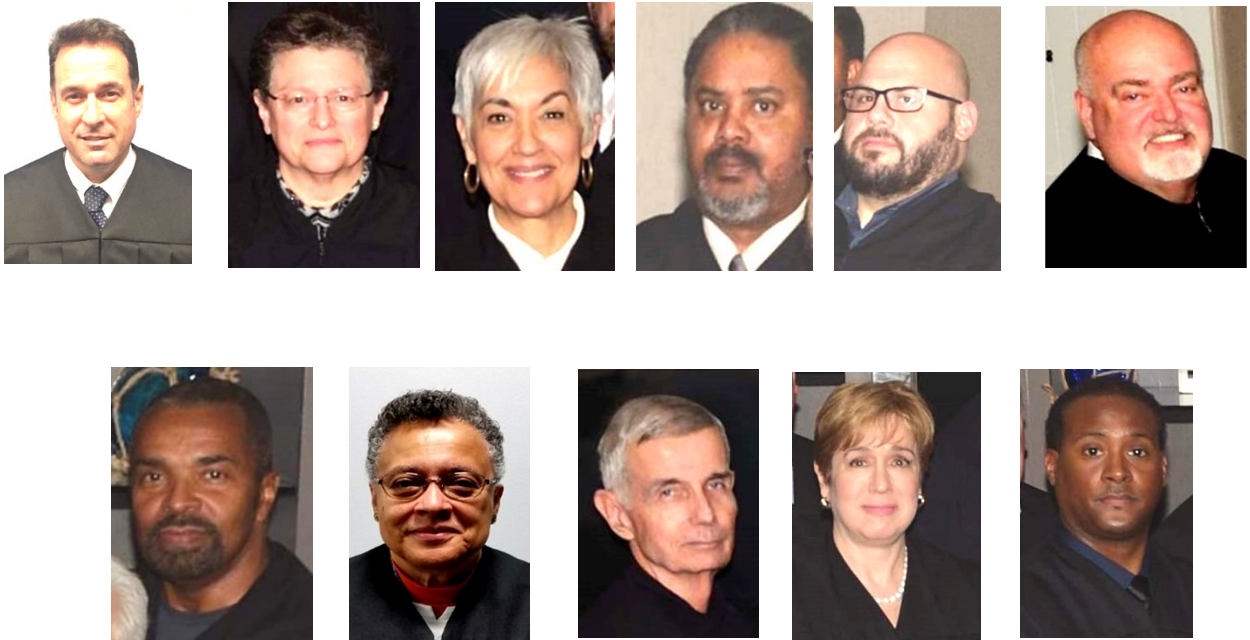
Bottom Row (left to right):

Earl MacFarlane; Cheryl McCabe-Stroman; Deputy Chief Magistrate Sean McCormick; Michelle Michini; Amanda Moyer; Mary Ellen Naugle.

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NEW CASTLE COUNTY JUDGES

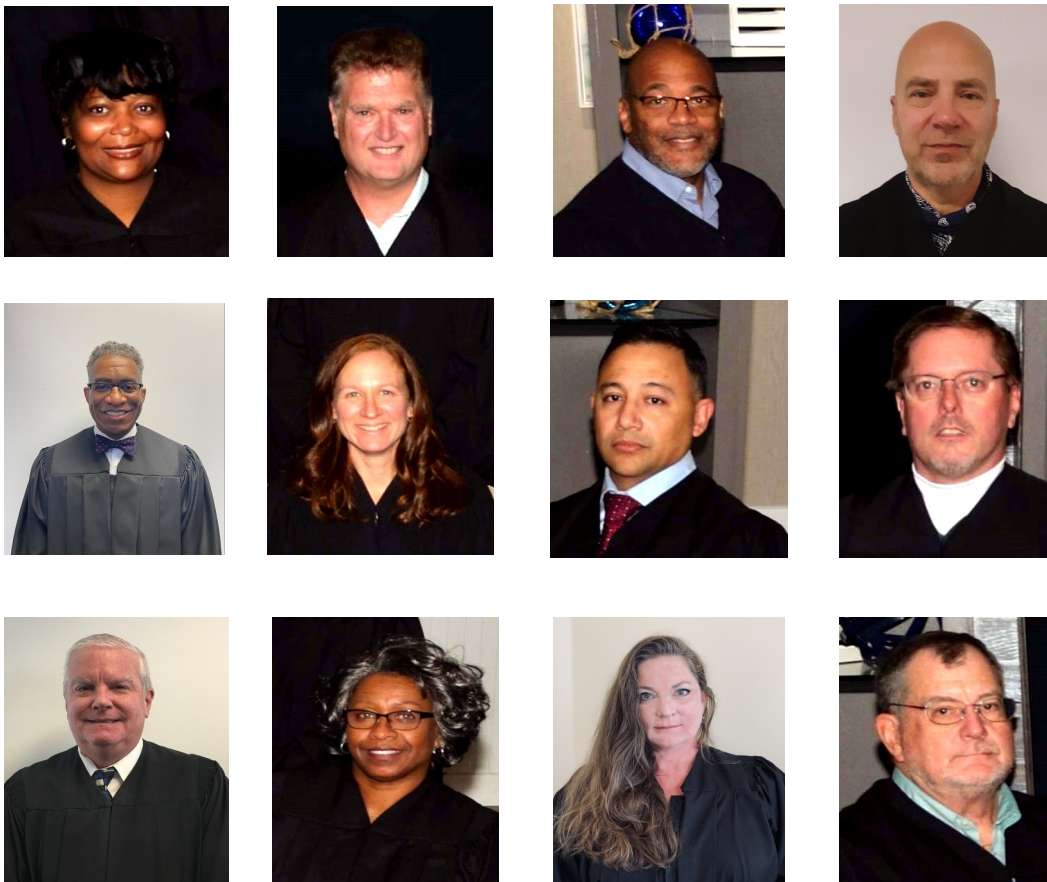


Top Row (left to right):
Walter Newton; Marie Page; Maria Perez-Chambers; Alex Peterson III;
Christopher Portante; John Potts.

Bottom Row (left to right):
Gerald Ross III; Katharine B. Ross; David R. Skelley; Susan Ufberg; Rodney
Vodery.

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KENT COUNTY JUDGES



Top Row (left to right):

Nicole Alston-Jackson; D. Kenneth Cox; Dwight Dillard; Wallace G. Edmanson II.

Middle Row (left to right):

Michael Green; Jamie Hicks; Alexander Montano; James A. Murray.

Bottom Row (left to right):

Michael P. Sherlock; Judy Smith; Dana Tracy; Deputy Chief Magistrate Kevin Wilson.

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JUSTICE OF THE PEACE COURT

SUSSEX COUNTY JUDGES



Top Row (left to right):

John J. Adams; Stephani Adams; Christopher A. Bradley; Maria Castro; Leah Chandler; Mirta Collazo; Richard D. Comly.

Middle Row (left to right):

Terri Davis; Bethany Fiske; Brett Graves; Catherine Hester; John R. Hudson; Michelle Jewell; Deputy Chief Magistrate Deborah Keenan.

Bottom Row (left to right):

Kristine Kellenbenz; Jennifer Sammons; Candace Whitelock; Scott Willey; William Patrick Wood.