



Family Court Division

Jackson County, Missouri

A Report Card to Our Stakeholders

On behalf of everyone working within our juvenile justice system, we are proud to present this report card to the community. From discussions with citizens and community leaders, common threads emerge. Citizens want their juvenile justice system to improve community safety. They want their juvenile justice system to assure justice for all participants. They want juvenile offenders to end their delinquent behavior, develop appropriate skill sets, and become productive community members. They want children to have safe and permanent homes.

The purpose of this report card is to provide our stakeholders with an overview of how their juvenile justice system is performing in four key areas:

Furthering Community Safety

Keeping Children Safe

Ensuring Offender Accountability

Building Juvenile and Family Competencies

We have established a set of benchmarks to inform the community about our work in these areas. By measuring our performance, we can hold ourselves accountable to our stakeholders: our fellow citizens. Taxpayers want government programs to be effective and efficient. By using evidence-based practices, we anticipate better outcomes in terms of improved offender accountability and rehabilitation and reduced recidivism. Evidence-based practices such as Annie E. Casey's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative help us to safely reduce the population of juveniles detained in a secure detention facility. Practices such as using an objective risk assessment instrument help assure that secure detention is used only for the right kids, at the right time, for the right purpose.

The global pandemic that struck in early 2020 required us to pivot into a virtual environment for hearings and meetings. We continued to offer support to families and supervision to youth by phone, by computer, and curbside. While many in-person hearings and services returned in 2021, others remained virtual or used a hybrid model. In all cases, our judicial officers and staff worked diligently to provide continuity and timeliness in case processing and intervention services.

We are learning that we achieve the best outcomes and the highest degree of community safety when we involve families and community members in decisions. Working together we can build a safe and more just Jackson County. To perform better on every one of these benchmarks, we need citizen participation. The Family Court has volunteer opportunities for citizens who wish to be involved with youth that range from participation in Community Accountability Boards to working with lawyers representing the best interests of children in child abuse/neglect cases. Our volunteers reside in areas all over the county. If you wish to become involved with these efforts, please contact Sonja Potter, Volunteer Coordinator, at (816) 881-4863.

Respectfully,

The Honorable Kevin Harrell
Administrative Judge

Theresa Byrd
Deputy Court Administrator

Lori Stipp
Juvenile Officer



Grade

A

Public Safety

A Report Card to Our Stakeholders

Furthering Community Safety

Family Court Services provides intervention and treatment services to youth referred to the court for law violations. We define recidivism as new law violations in the first year following a referral.

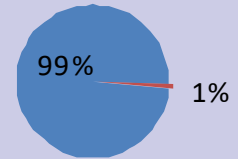
Around one percent of the approximately 73,162 juveniles ages 10-17 living in Jackson County were referred to the Family Court for law violations in 2021. The Juvenile Officer received 828 referrals alleging delinquency and has filed petitions on 256 (31%). The remaining referrals were dismissed (40%), diverted (23%), transferred (5%), or have not yet been disposed (1%).

To measure public-safety outcomes, we examined 301 youth diverted or released from supervision in 2020. Of these youth, 90% were not referred for new allegations in the following year. This analysis excludes youth placed in the custody of the Children’s Division and youth committed to the Division of Youth Services. Recidivism rates were similar for diverted youth and youth placed on probation, while the rate for youth in residential treatment was a bit higher.

In recent years, we have successfully reduced the unnecessary use of secure detention through our involvement with the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative. Since 2007, the number of youth admitted to secure detention annually has declined 80%. In 2021, 208 youth were admitted to secure detention, while 62 youth were detained at Hilltop, the Court’s non-secure residential facility, and 74 were placed on home detention with electronic monitoring. Youth assessed as low risk to public safety were released to the community. Youth screened but not admitted to secure detention appeared for their scheduled hearings 92% of the time, with 93% not referred for new offenses while awaiting hearings.

GRADE: The Family Court’s performance in community safety was excellent. Throughout the state of Missouri, 79% of youth referred were not referred for another offense in the following year (Office of the State Courts Administrator, 2020 Juvenile and Family Division Annual Report).

One percent of Jackson County Youth Were Referred to the Court for a Law Violation



Law-Abiding Behavior for Youth Released from Jurisdiction in 2020

Diverted	156
% referred in 1 yr.	9%
Released from Probation	116
% referred in 1 yr.	8%
Released from Residential Treatment (Hilltop and Private Residential Placement)	29
% referred in 1 yr.	17%
Total	301
% referred in 1 yr.	10%

(Use of 2020 data allows 12 months for recidivism study.)

Youth Released from Secure Detention Awaiting Trial in 2021





Grade
B

Child Safety

A Report Card to Our Stakeholders

Keeping Children Safe

The Juvenile Officer files approximately 1,000 cases alleging child abuse and/or neglect each year. This amounts to 6.3 per 1,000 children ages 0-17 in Jackson County [164,090]—less than 1% of the population of children aged 0-17.

PERMANENCY OUTCOMES: Permanent homes are secured for children through reunification with a parent, adoption, or guardianship. Of children released from the court’s jurisdiction in 2021, 93% reached permanency. Most of the remaining 7% were released from jurisdiction with another planned arrangement such as independent living, while a few were released for other circumstances such as being on the run.

CHILD PROTECTION & PERMANENCY UNIT (CPPU): In January 2019, the Court established the CPPU with the goal of safely reducing time to permanency for children ages 0-3. Of the first group of 69 infants and toddlers served, 63% were safely reunified with parents compared to 42% of comparable infants and toddlers.

SAFETY: Of the 803 children released from the court’s jurisdiction in 2020, 99% were not referred for maltreatment in the following year. To ensure that children involved with the court are able to safely visit non-custodial parents, the Connections Program, administered by Family Court Resource Services, provides supervision for visits and exchanges. Despite disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the program provided 756 supervised and therapeutic visits in 2021.

FAMILY TREATMENT COURT: The Family Treatment Court (formerly Family Drug Court) was established in April 1998 and provides community-based services, treatment, and frequent judicial oversight to parents referred to the court for substance abuse. The graduation rate for the 2021 exit cohort was 51%—above the national average of 46%.

GRADE: The Family Court’s performance in regard to child safety was above average. Nationally, about 5% of child abuse victims experience a recurrence of abuse within 6 months. That rate is 3% for the state of Missouri (Child Welfare Outcomes 2015: Report to Congress, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). Of children released from jurisdiction in Jackson County, less than one percent were referred for maltreatment within 6 months of release.

Child Abuse and Neglect Permanency Outcomes

93% of children released from jurisdiction in 2021 reached permanency.

- 58% were reunified with a parent or parents
- 35% were adopted or appointed a legal guardian

Child Abuse and Neglect Safety Outcomes

Children released from jurisdiction in 2020: 804

No new abuse or neglect 12 months after release: 99%

(Use of 2020 data allows 12 months for safety study. Cases transferred to other courts and youth committed to the Division of Youth Services or certified as adults are not included.)

FCRS Connections Program

Supervised and Therapeutic Visits: 756

Family Drug Court 2021 Exit Cohort

Families: 69
Children: 137

Graduation Rates
16th Circuit: 51%
National Average: 46%



Grade
B+

Accountability

A Report Card to Our Stakeholders

Ensuring Accountability and Victim Restoration

RESTITUTION: In many juvenile courts, youth may be ordered to pay restitution, i.e., money to compensate victims for the expenses they incurred due to the youth’s behavior. In 2021, the court released from jurisdiction 29 youth who had a restitution order. All but one of these youth paid their restitution in full.

COMMUNITY SERVICE: Juvenile courts often order youth to complete community service as a way to hold them accountable for their actions while providing them with knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become productive citizens. Of 90 youth released from probation in 2021, 28 (31%) were ordered to complete community service. Only one youth fell short of the hours ordered, while another youth performed an equal number of additional hours.

VICTIM EMPATHY: Most youth ordered to probation are required to attend victim empathy classes delivered by Restitution Services or the Field Services counselor. In 2021, 57 youth attended victim empathy classes, and 47 (82%) completed the program successfully.

COMMUNITY SUPERVISION: Family Court Field Services supervises youth ordered to probation and provides programming that holds youth accountable for their actions. The Day Reporting Drop-In Center offers youth who are not attending school a structured daytime environment. Evening Reporting provides intensive after-school supervision in partnership with community organizations. Both programs offer skill-building and treatment opportunities, and youth participate in victim empathy classes and perform community service. The Day Reporting Drop-In Center was suspended in the summer of 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but Evening Reporting continued to operate, with staff leading groups online and conducting curbside visits on a weekly basis. Over the course of the year, 35 youth participated in Day Reporting, and 21 youth participated in Evening Reporting.

Of youth exiting community supervision in 2021, 84% were released successfully, completing court orders for treatment, restitution, and/or community service.

GRADE: The Family Court’s performance in accountability was above average and in some ways exemplary.

Restitution and Community Service for youth released in 2021

Restitution

Ordered: **\$14,429.70**
Paid: **\$13,989.70 (97%)**

Community Service

Ordered: **630 hrs.**
Completed*: **630 hrs. (100%)**

*Includes hours ordered for youth who fulfilled the community service requirement by maintaining employment or a C average.

Victim Empathy and Accountability

100% of youth ordered to Standard or ISS Probation were required to participate in victim empathy sessions

82% of youth who started victim empathy sessions successfully completed them

Community Supervision

% of youth successfully released: **84%**



Grade

A

Competency

A Report Card to Our Stakeholders

Developing Youth and Family Competencies

This page presents data on youth released from court jurisdiction in 2021 after probation supervision. It includes youth successfully and unsuccessfully released.

RESISTANCE TO DRUG & ALCOHOL USE: At the start of supervision, more than half of youth were engaged in or strongly suspected of regular or intermittent drug or alcohol abuse. After completion of supervision and treatment, this rate was reduced to about 1 in 10. The Field Services Clinical Unit’s Substance Abuse Counselor provides drug abuse assessments as well as individual and group education to youth on probation and those referred from Prevention and Diversion. In 2021, 19 youth participated in substance abuse education classes, and 13 youth participated in substance abuse treatment.

SCHOOL PARTICIPATION: At the start of court supervision, about a quarter of youth were not participating in any sort of educational program (or working if over 16). These youth had either dropped out or were suspended or expelled. Probation officers work to get youth actively involved in school or an alternative education program (such as Job Corps or the Missouri Option Program) and help them identify job opportunities as appropriate. By case closure, 96% youth were in an education program or working.

PARENTING: At the beginning of court supervision, 36% of youth had parents with identified support and supervision challenges. All but two of these families (94%) were offered services, including counseling and parenting education, or were receiving treatment in a private residential facility.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION: One of the best ways to reduce citizen and community victimization is to prevent crime from happening in the first place. Citizen participation in justice-system efforts is essential to furthering public safety. Despite limitations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 41 new volunteers were placed at the Court in 2021, and volunteers contributed 142 hours of service. Mentors served 48 court-involved youth in 2021. Seven new matches were made, eight new mentors were recruited, and 80% of mentors and mentees made face-to-face contact twice a month.

GRADE: The Family Court’s overall performance regarding skill development was excellent.

Drug & Alcohol Abuse	
Drug and/or Alcohol Concerns at Intake:	60%
at Case Closure:	11%

School Participation	
Youth Not Involved in Education or Work at Intake:	23%
at Case Closure:	4%

Parenting Skills	
Need for Services to Support Positive Parental Structure and Discipline at Intake:	36%
% offered services:	94%

Citizen Participation	
# of New Volunteers:	41
Total Volunteer Hours:	142
# of Mentees:	48
# of New Mentors:	7