

FAMILY COURT



FAMILY COURT

CHIEF JUDGE MICHAEL K. NEWELL

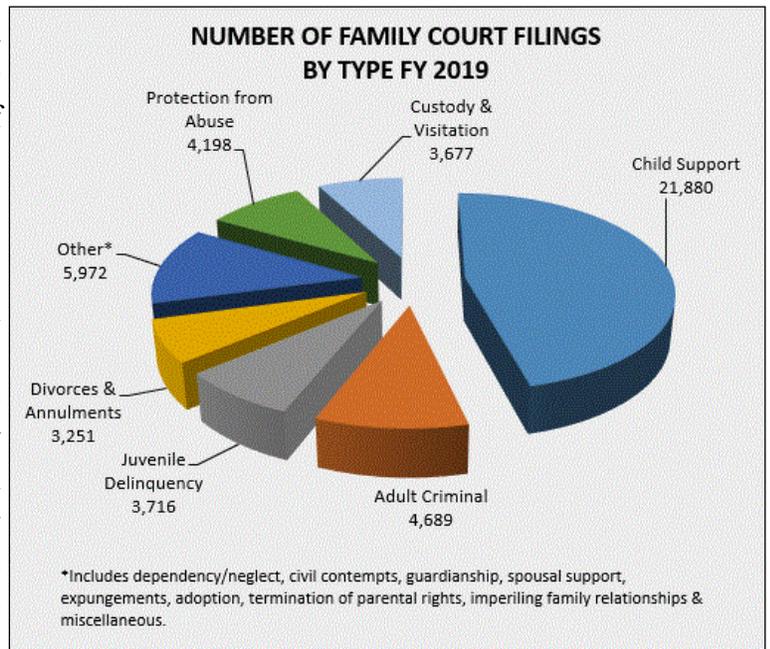


Family Court continues to be guided by its mission: to provide equal access to justice for the families and children under its jurisdiction in a manner that is fair and efficient and that maintains the public's trust and confidence in an independent and accountable judiciary. We strive each day to build an atmosphere that ensures all members of the public are treated with courtesy, dignity, and respect. Family Court continues to be a busy Court with over 47,000 filings and issuing in excess of 48,000 dispositions.

Family Court realized minimal change in annual filings this Fiscal Year. Overall filings in Family Court marginally decreased statewide by 0.2%. The Court's civil filings increased by 1.3%, and its criminal and delinquency filings decreased by 6.4%. By county, New Castle experienced a marginal increase

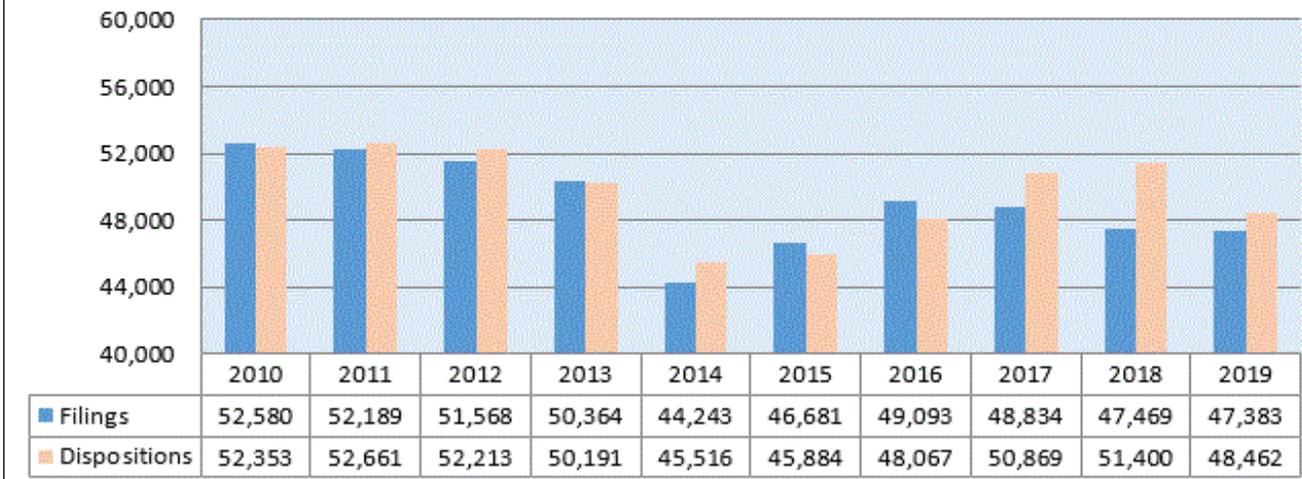
in its filings at 0.7%. Kent County experienced an increase in overall filings amounting to 3%. Finally, Sussex County decreased by 5% in total filings.

Child support filings represent the highest volume of filings for Family Court and the Court experienced the largest increase in this case type. Statewide, the increase in child support was 5.3%. This represents the



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FAMILY COURT CIVIL & CRIMINAL FILINGS & DISPOSITIONS BY FISCAL YEAR



first increase in three years. There was an increase of 7.3% for New Castle County, 11.8% for Kent County and a decrease of 2.4% for Sussex County. Juvenile delinquency filings decreased by 13.1%, representing the largest decrease among all case categories. This is the third consecutive year of decrease, due in part to the creation and expansion of pre-arrest diversion programs such as civil citation. The decrease is also directly attributable to the increase in the number of offenses eligible for expungements.

In Fiscal Year 2019, Family Court was selected to participate as a National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (“NCJFCJ”) Implementation Site that will enhance our Court Improvement Program (“CIP”) work. Over the years, NCJFCJ has worked with 21 other state and tribal jurisdictions to improve their outcomes for children and families. As an Implementation Site, we will receive individualized assessments, training, and technical assistance from NCJFCJ to further support our ever-evolving child welfare practices. We were selected due to our

commitment and motivation to implement system reform efforts, our willingness to organize and form a strong collaborative team, and our desire to improve current court practice.

Family Court has entered the sustainability phase of the Family Court Enhancement Project. The project, which guided Family Court through improved practices in domestic violence, custody and visitation, was sponsored by the Department of Justice’s Office on Violence Against Women, in collaboration with the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, the Battered Women’s Justice Project, the Center for Court Innovation, and the National Institute for Justice. Helped by a newly appointed Domestic Violence Coordinator, Family Court has improved upon its Protection for Abuse (“PFA”) directional signage, case processing practices and the overall courthouse experience for litigants. The Family Court celebrated its successes and the end of the grant with a “round table” discussion on domestic violence with Governor John Carney on October 9, 2018. Governor Carney signed the proclamation

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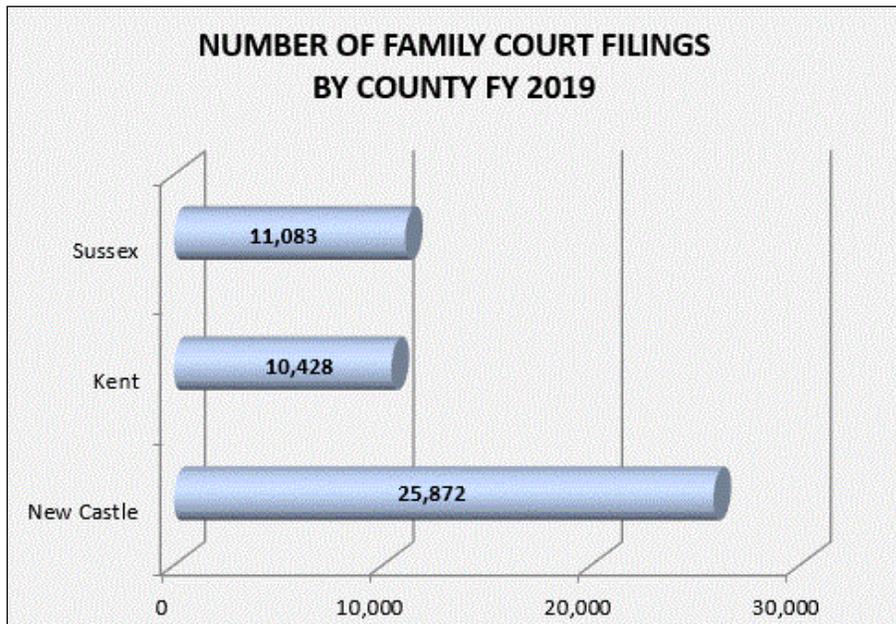
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declaring October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month at the conclusion of the meeting.

Family Court continues to incorporate technology in its continuous effort to enhance access to justice for self-represented litigants. Originally established in New Castle County in 2017, the eCourtroom initiative expanded to Sussex County this Fiscal Year. The technology has provided litigants and attorneys the opportunity to present evidence electronically during court proceedings. This project came about as a joint effort among the Family Court, Richard Herrmann Esq., and Tom Russo and Dan Vink of doeLegal, Inc. Initial funding was complemented by the Richard K. Herrmann Technology American Inn of Court, and the Melson-Arshnt American Inn of Court. A video series introducing the functionality and use of the eCourtroom to self-represented litigants and members of the Bar premiered on the Family Court website. Plans are to expand this technology to Kent County and additional courtrooms in both New Castle and Sussex Counties.

Family Court is continuing in its efforts to construct new Family Court buildings in Kent and Sussex Counties. The current buildings are undersized, undignified, and unsafe. These projects are critical in providing Family Court and the citizens of Delaware with adequate, secure and dignified facilities.

In October of this year, the Honorable Mark D. Buckworth was reappointed to a third term as a Family Court Judge in New Castle County. In addition, reappointed as Commissioners were the Honorable DeSales Haley (fifth term), the Honorable Loretta Young (fifth term) and the Honorable Jennifer Mayo (fourth term) in New Castle County. We thank them for their expertise and commitment to Family Court.



Family Court also welcomed a new Judge this Fiscal Year. The Honorable Michael W. Arrington took the oath of office in June 2019, serving in New Castle County.

Judge Arrington replaces the Honorable Barbara D. Crowell, who retired in June after twenty-three years on the bench in Family Court.

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. 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. ♦

FAMILY COURT



FAMILY COURT JUDGES

Front Row (from 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 (from left to right): Judge Joelle P. Hitch, Judge Louann Vari, Judge Kenneth M. Millman

Back Row (from 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

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FAMILY COURT COMMISSIONERS

Front Row (from left to right): Commissioner DeSales Haley, Commissioner Para Wolcott, Commissioner Danielle S. Blount, Commissioner Emily Farley, Commissioner Loretta Young, Commissioner Samantha Lukoff, Commissioner Craig Fitzgerald

Middle Row (from left to right): Commissioner Kim DeBonte, Commissioner Sonja Wilson, Commissioner Theresa Sedivec, Commissioner James Maxwell

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

Not Pictured: Commissioner Susan Tussey