

FAMILY COURT

CHIEF JUDGE MICHAEL K. NEWELL

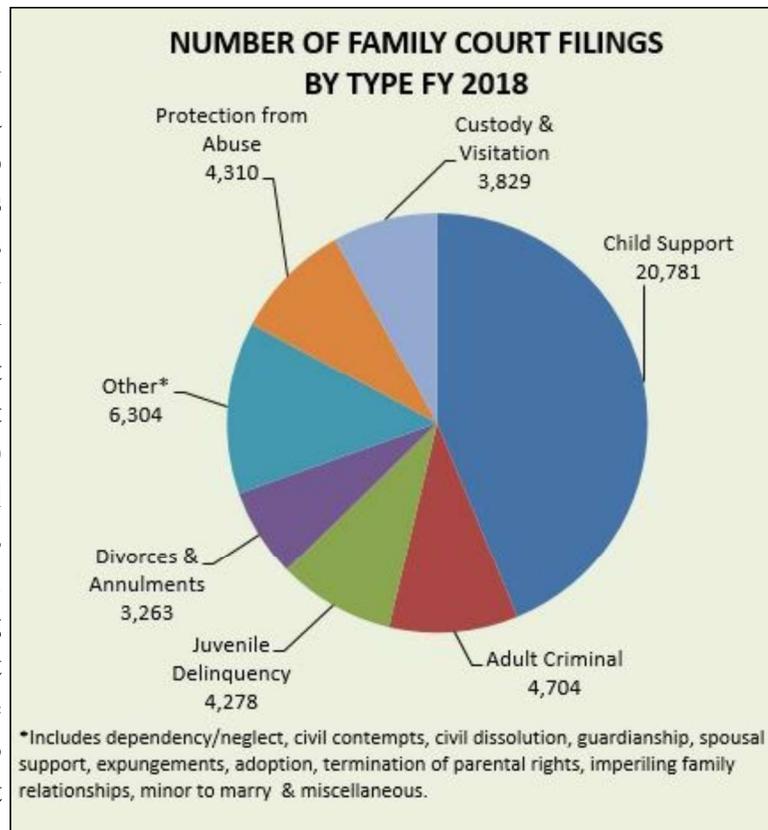


FAMILY COURT

Family Court strives to provide equal access to justice to the families and children under our jurisdiction in a manner that is fair and efficient and that maintains the public's trust in an independent and accountable judiciary.

In Fiscal Year 2018, Family Court had 47,469 filings, a marginal decrease of 2.8% statewide from the previous year. The court's civil filings decreased by approximately 1,700 since last year. Family Court experienced the most significant increase in adult criminal filings with over 430 more cases filed this fiscal year. Child Support filings decreased by 9.2% statewide, about 2,100 cases, accounting for the most significant impact given that this case type encompasses close to half of all Family Court filings.

We continued to implement recommendations from the Family Court Enhancement Project (FCEP) Report previously issued in December 2016. The Project is sponsored by the Department of Justice's Office on



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FAMILY COURT

FAMILY COURT CIVIL & CRIMINAL FILINGS & DISPOSITIONS BY FISCAL YEAR



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 of Justice with a focus on domestic violence and custody. This year, the court completed a Protection from Abuse (PFA) Instruction Packet, as well as a Child Custody Instruction Packet as part of the initiative, and both were translated into Spanish and Creole. With the help of the Delaware Law School Information Technology Team, the court developed informational videos that are presented to litigants during PFA calendars to provide litigants with procedural information on their day in court. Further, the court implemented procedures that assist in information sharing between case types, particularly with coordination of PFA and custody cases.

In addition to changes as a result of FCEP, several process improvements were implemented this fiscal year. Significant changes to Family Court Civil Procedure Rule 16 took effect which standardize our pre-trial civil case management practices, and

better inform litigants on the mediation and court hearing process. We implemented judicial assignment upon filing, and Rule 16 changes alleviated the case dismissal requirement when a parent education course is not completed in a custody case.

In September, Family Court developed an eCourtroom in New Castle County to provide both pro se litigants and attorneys with user-friendly technology for presenting evidence in court. This project came about as a joint effort among the Family Court, Richard K. Herrmann Technology American Inn of Court, and the Melson-Arsht American Inn of Court. The system has allowed the court to expand upon its ability to provide access to justice for self-represented litigants. We plan to expand this technology to Kent and Sussex County Family Courts in the upcoming year.

As a branch, we continue to work on the project to construct new Family Court buildings in Kent and Sussex Counties. In partnership with the Office of Management and Budget, the court is acquiring land

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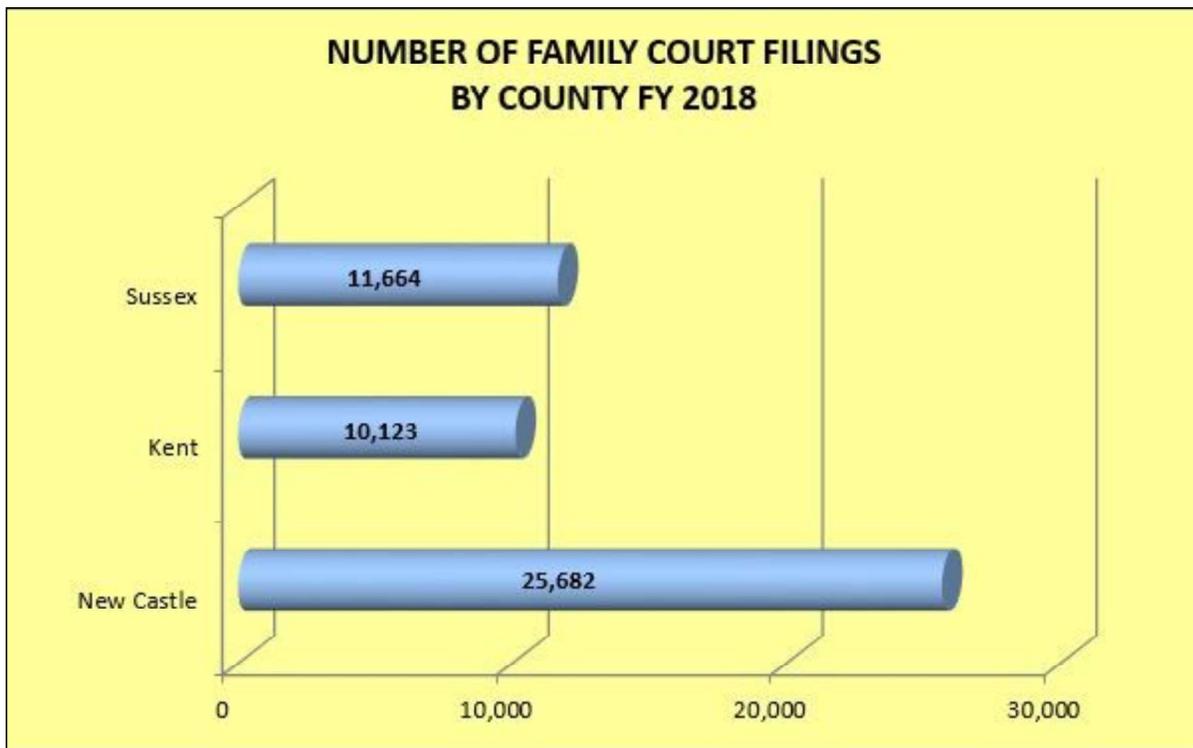
for the proposed locations of the new courthouses. These projects are critical in providing Family Court and the people we serve with safe, secure, and dignified facilities.

The Honorable Joelle P. Hitch was reappointed as a Family Court Judge in January of this year. In addition, reappointed as Commissioners were the Honorable David W. Jones, the Honorable Sonja T. Wilson, and the Honorable Para K. Wolcott.

Family Court welcomed two new Commissioners this fiscal year. The Honorable Samantha J. Lukoff took the oath of office in January 2018, serving in New Castle County. Commissioner Lukoff replaced the Honorable John Carrow, who retired in Septem-

ber after 30 years on the bench in Family Court. The Honorable Emily A. Farley joined Family Court as a Commissioner in Kent County in June 2018.

The Family Court is proud of its role in developing programs to help improve justice for the litigants who need the services of our court. The success of these programs is due to the combined efforts and dedication of the men and women of Family Court. It is critically important that we continue our efforts to improve the efficiency and quality of justice that our litigants deserve. ♦



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FAMILY COURT



FAMILY COURT JUDGES

Bottom Row (from left to right): Judge Paula T. Ryan, Judge Felice G. Kerr, Judge Mardi F. Pyott, Judge Jennifer B. Ranji, Judge Louann Vari, Judge Mary S. Much.

Middle Row (from left to right): Judge Kenneth M. Millman, Judge Natalie J. Haskins, Judge Arlene Minus Coppadge, Judge Mark D. Buckworth, Judge Barbara D. Crowell, Judge Janell S. Ostroski.

Top Row (from left to right): Judge Robert B. Coonin, Judge Peter B. Jones, Chief Judge Michael K. Newell, Judge James G. McGiffin, Jr., Judge Joelle P. Hitch.

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FAMILY COURT



FAMILY COURT COMMISSIONERS

Bottom Row (from left to right): Commissioner Samantha J. Lukoff, Commissioner Theresa A. Sedivec, Commissioner Emily A. Farley, Commissioner Loretta M. Young, Commissioner Jennifer L. Mayo.

Middle Rows Combined (from left to right): Commissioner Danielle S. Blount, Commissioner Gretchen C. Gilchrist, Commissioner Kim DeBonte, Commissioner Sonja T. Wilson, Commissioner Susan P. Tussey, Commissioner Paraskevi K. Wolcott.

Top Row (from left to right): Commissioner James J. Maxwell, Commissioner Craig R. Fitzgerald, Chief Judge Michael K. Newell, Commissioner Andrew K. Southmayd, Commissioner M. DeSales Haley.

Not Pictured: Commissioner David W. Jones.