

SIXTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT

State of Illinois
County of Kane

2020 Annual Report



Court Administration Office
Kane County Judicial Center
37W777 Route 38, Suite 400A
St. Charles, Illinois 60175
<https://www.illinois16thjudicialcircuit.org>

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Mission Statement



It is the mission of the judiciary of the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit to provide equal access to a fair and impartial system of justice by which legal disputes may be resolved in a timely, efficient manner, while fostering public trust and confidence.



A Message from Chief Judge Clint Hull

The editors of the *Oxford English Dictionary* have an annual tradition of selecting a “Word of the Year.” The editors concluded that 2020 is a year that cannot be neatly accommodated in a single word. Instead, *Oxford* put together the “Words of an Unprecedented Year” which included “COVID-19,” “pandemic,” “mask up,” “remote,” and “mute/unmute.”

Following *Oxford’s* lead, I reviewed all of the 2020 Sixteenth Judicial Circuit General Orders for words and phrases that would help describe 2020 in the language of our courts. Starting with [General Order 20-05](#) effective March 13, 2020, phrases that could describe our year include “Emergency Measures Impacting Court Operations,” “in-court hearings suspended,” “jury trials suspended,” “speedy trial provisions tolled,” “masks required,” “contact tracing,” “Zoom hearings,” etc. You get the picture.

However, unlike the *Oxford* editors, I do believe I can pick one word to describe the way the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit (Circuit) has handled 2020. The word? **Perseverance**. According to the *Oxford Dictionaries Online*, perseverance is defined as “persistence in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success.” The Circuit persevered in 2020. Despite obstacles that seemed to pop up on a daily or even hourly basis, the people and organizations that make up the Circuit made it work. When faced with an obstacle, instead of complaining about it, people collaborated, cooperated, problem-solved, and figured out a way to progress. This happened repeatedly throughout the year and makes me proud to be the Chief Judge of the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit.

As we enter 2021, I, like so many others, am keeping my fingers crossed that the vaccine distribution will help us get back to our pre-COVID routines. I understand that we will face challenges as we attempt to work our way through the backlog of court cases COVID-19 has created. Just as we persevered in 2020, I am confident that we will all continue to work together in 2021 to ensure the Circuit runs effectively and efficiently for everyone involved.

Please take a moment to review our annual report to learn about the outstanding work performed throughout 2020 by the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Clint Hull". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned to the right of the main text block.

Judges of the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit Court

Second District Appellate Court Judge

Hon. Donald C. Hudson

Circuit Judges

Hon. Clint Hull
Chief Judge

Hon. John A. Barsanti
Presiding Felony Division

Hon. Susan Clancy Boles,
Presiding Civil Division

Hon. René Cruz
Presiding Traffic/Misdemeanor Division

Hon. Elizabeth Flood
Presiding Family Division

Hon. Kevin T. Busch

Hon. John G. Dalton

Hon. Joseph Grady

Hon. James Murphy

Hon. Michael J. Noland

Hon. John A. Noverini

Hon. D.J. Tegeler

Hon. Robert K. Villa

Associate Judges

Hon. Kathryn Karayannis
Presiding Juvenile Division

Hon. Reginald Campbell

Hon. Bradley David

Hon. Christine Downs

Hon. Keith A. Johnson

Hon. David Kliment

Hon. Marmarie J. Kostelny

Hon. Salvatore LoPiccolo, Jr.

Hon. Sandra Parga

Hon. William Parkhurst

Hon. Charles E. Petersen

Hon. Mark A. Pheanis

Hon. Divya K. Sarang

Hon. Todd B. Tarter

Hon. Alice Tracy

Hon. Julio Cesar Valdez

Hon. Julia A. Yetter

About the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit

Article VI, the Judicial Article of the Illinois Constitution of 1970, provides for a unified, three-tiered judiciary consisting of Circuit Courts, Appellate Courts and the Supreme Court. The Illinois Supreme Court is the highest court in the State. The Illinois Supreme Court is comprised of seven Justices, three from the First Appellate Judicial District and one from the four remaining Appellate Judicial Districts. The Illinois Appellate Court is the second tier of the judiciary. The Appellate Court is divided into five Judicial Districts. The Sixteenth Judicial Circuit and five other circuits are grouped together to form the Second Judicial District of the Appellate Court. Currently, one circuit judge from Kane County, the Honorable Donald C. Hudson, serves on the Illinois Appellate Court, Second District.

Circuit Courts, also known as trial courts, are the first tier of the judiciary. The State of Illinois is divided into 23 Judicial Circuits, including our Sixteenth Judicial Circuit, which is a single county circuit comprised of Kane County. The Circuit Court is a court of general jurisdiction, which means it has original jurisdiction in all matters except those limited cases in which the Supreme Court has original jurisdiction. Trial courts hear a wide variety of civil and criminal cases ranging from small claims and

evictions to family/domestic relations and criminal felonies.

In the Circuit Court, there are two types of Judges: Circuit Judges and Associate Judges. The Sixteenth Judicial Circuit has 14 Circuit Judges and 17 Associate Judges. Circuit Judges are elected by popular vote for an initial six-year term, and may be retained by voters for additional six-year terms. Circuit Judges can hear any circuit court case. Circuit Judges are initially elected either circuit-wide, from the county where they reside or from a sub-circuit within a circuit, depending on the type of vacancy they are filling. Circuit Judges appoint and vote to retain Associate Judges for four-year terms. Associate Judges may hear all types of cases, except felony matters, which require special authorization from the Illinois Supreme Court.

The Circuit Judges elect one of their members to serve as Chief Judge. The Chief Judge serves a two-year term, and is limited to no more than two consecutive terms. The Chief Judge has general administrative authority and can assign cases within the circuit.

Court Locations

The Sixteenth Judicial Circuit consists of six court locations comprised of two main courthouses, a juvenile court building, and three branch courts. Different case types are heard at each location. The Kane County Courthouse houses civil, arbitration, chancery, small claims, probate, abuse and neglect, and foreclosure matters. The Kane County Judicial Center houses family, felony, domestic violence, driving under the influence (DUI), treatment alternative, and drug rehabilitation cases. The Juvenile Justice Center houses juvenile delinquency cases. The Kane Branch Court, the Aurora Branch Court, and the Elgin Branch Court house traffic, misdemeanor, petty offense and ordinance.



Kane County Courthouse
100 South Third Street
Geneva, Illinois 60134



Kane County Judicial Center
37W777 Route 38
St. Charles, Illinois 60175



Kane County Branch Court
530 South Randall Road
St. Charles, Illinois 60177



Kane County Juvenile Justice Center
37W655 Route 38
St. Charles, Illinois 60175



Aurora Branch Court
1200 East Indian Trail Road
Aurora, Illinois 60505



Elgin Branch Court
150 Dexter Court
Elgin, Illinois 60120

The Impact of COVID-19

2020 started out like every other year. As March arrived, the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit was holding court and moving cases through the system. The week of March 9 started with media throughout our country reporting on the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the exponential increase in the number of people testing positive. As the week progressed, businesses and governmental agencies started to announce that they were closing their doors and ordering their workers to stay home for their safety. On Friday, March 13, 2020, the Circuit, after consultation with the Administrative Office of Illinois Courts and the Kane County Public Health Department, entered [General Order 20-05](#) closing all Sixteenth Judicial Circuit branch courts through March 27, 2020. The following Monday, March 16, 2020, [General Order 20-06](#), was entered closing all Circuit courtrooms except for emergency matters through April 17, 2020. These General Orders launched the Circuit into unprecedented territory. No one imagined that the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit would not resume “normal” operations for the remainder of 2020.

COVID-19 forced the Circuit to think outside of the box. How could we conduct court without having people inside our buildings? Richard Susskind, author of *Online Courts and the Future of Justice*, asked “Is Court a service or a place?” We no longer had the place. The challenge facing the Circuit (and the entire court system) was how to adapt and innovate in order to provide the services needed to continue operating and providing lawyers and litigants their day in court.

The challenge brought out the best in everyone. The entire Circuit came together to figure out how to make it work. As a result, as 2020 came to a close, although the “place” of our courtrooms remained closed to the public, the “service” continued and the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit was open for business.

Building the Infrastructure



Bond call, which takes place 365 days a year, was the first remote court call. By statute, individuals arrested for certain offenses must appear in court within 24 to 48 hours after their arrest.

Transporting these individuals put the individual, law enforcement, and the judicial staff at risk. Our county’s Information Technology (IT) Department went to work consulting with lawyers, the circuit clerk, judiciary, and judicial staff to develop a solution. Remote bond call started the week of March 16 and provided the blueprint for designing the remote courtroom. The IT Department immediately began ordering the necessary equipment to transition us to remote court: Laptops and desktops with cameras, large screen television sets, OWLs (for video conferencing), Zoom licenses, YouTube livestreaming accounts, DocuSign licenses, etc.

The IT Department worked around the clock to get the equipment installed so we could immediately meet the needs of the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit. By April, most courtrooms were fully remote-court operational.

The infrastructure was built. The next challenge? Teaching everyone how to use it. Judges and judicial staff needed to learn how to open and run a virtual, remote court call. Lawyers needed to learn how to sign on to the different court calls and appear. Circuit Clerks needed to make sure electronic orders were being prepared, signed, and submitted. Litigants, with different levels of access to technology, needed to learn how to appear in court via Zoom on cellphones, tablets, laptops, and computers. Once again, the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit responded to the challenge and started the process of educating everyone. The IT Department provided individual and group training sessions, attorneys and judges who were more technologically advanced helped those who struggled, a group of judges drafted [Guidelines for Virtual Courtroom Proceedings in the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit](#), and the law library developed Zoom instruction handouts in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) that were distributed countywide. The end result? Each day, each court session, the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit got better at holding remote court. We became more efficient, more effective, and as a result, could serve more people.

Customer Service

Who are our customers? The litigants who have cases before the court. The lawyers who may represent those litigants. The public who has a right to know what is occurring in the court system. These are just three of many customers that the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit serves. Throughout 2020 the Circuit focused on customer service and helping those who needed to access the court system do so.

When courts moved to remote access to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, information was pushed out into the community using a plethora of mediums including mail, texts, websites, videos, and a new [Facebook](#) page. Despite advertising that the courthouses were physically closed and cases would be heard remotely (Zoom), many people still physically appeared at the courthouses on their court dates.

To assist these people, as well as those litigants who did not have devices, connectivity, or the technical understanding of how to attend court using Zoom, the Kane County Law Library, with support from security, bailiffs, and judicial staff instituted procedures to help these litigants attend court.



A table was set up in the vestibule of the Judicial Center where staff would help people verify their court dates, courtrooms, and teach them how to download and attend Zoom court on the litigants' personal smartphones. Interpreters were also on hand. Infographics on how to attend Zoom court were created in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#) and disseminated. If someone did not have a device, connectivity, or technical understanding, the courts provided socially distanced space within the jury lounge and an iPad so people would not miss their court date.

Hybrid In-Person Court/Remote Hearings

June 1, 2020, through November 30, 2020

The Sixteenth Judicial Circuit welcomed a reduced amount of people back into the courthouse starting June 1, 2020. This hybrid schedule lasted until November 30, 2020, when we moved back to remote hearings. For the six months between June and November, the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit worked with the Kane County Health Department to make sure we could operate court while keeping everyone, court goers and staff alike, healthy.

Our re-opening plan included but was not limited to:

- All people entering the buildings were required to wear a face covering, were asked screening questions, and had their temperatures taken before being allowed entry

- Sanitizing stations were located throughout the courthouses



- Cleaning crews were hired to wipe down high-touch surfaces throughout the day

- All hallways and courtrooms were marked with tape to help people socially distance from one

another

- Occupancy levels of every room were determined and limited to the number of people that could safely appear



COURTROOM 305	
JUDGE KLIMENT	
MAX # OF PEOPLE IN ROOM	19
MAX # OF DEF/SPECTATORS SITTING IN GALLERY	10

- Contact tracing forms were required and new check-in procedures were developed and utilized. Staggered court calls were developed and utilized to keep the number of people entering the courthouses to a minimum
- [Administrative orders](#) were entered by each Presiding Judge outlining new policies and procedures
- Remote hearings using Zoom were emphasized
- [Videos](#) were produced and posted to educate the public on the implemented safety protocols
- Interpretet, an interpretation company, was hired to provide interpreter services through the Zoom platform
- DocuSign was used substantially
- [Livestreaming](#) on YouTube was used in criminal cases
- Judges allowed contested motions and bench trials to be heard in-person on a limited basis in order to attempt to reduce the backlog of cases
- Kane County Jail and the Illinois Department of Corrections adapted and began allowing inmates to appear via Zoom, allowing the court to hear more in-custody cases



Criminal Jury Trials

August 1, 2020, through November 30, 2020

After acclimating to the hybrid schedule, the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit implemented new protocols to allow for jury trials to start beginning August 3, 2020. In order to successfully hold criminal jury trials, the following steps were taken:

- A group of judges produced [Guidelines for Jury Trials in the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit Due to Covid-19 Pandemic](#) for both the criminal and civil division. These guidelines addressed everything from how jurors were to be summoned, *voir dire*, set-up of the courtroom, the procedures to be used throughout the trial and deliberations, and how to make sure it was a public trial. Like the [Virtual Guidelines Manual](#) these guidelines were shared with judicial circuits throughout the state.

- **Videos** were produced and distributed to educate potential jurors on the safety precautions being utilized within the court buildings to ensure their safety; plexiglass shields were installed in the courtrooms; and cleaning protocols were established and implemented throughout the trials.



- The Sixteenth Judicial Circuit was one of a handful of circuits throughout the State to hold a number of criminal juries during this four-month period.

Conclusion

“It is not the strongest species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the most responsive to change.”

Charles Darwin

COVID-19 challenged the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit to respond to change and we did. We were successful because of the people and organizations that make up the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit. A huge thank you on behalf of all of us.

2020 Highlights

A new Kane County Public Defender was hired

On March 16, 2020, Rachele Conant, a twenty plus year veteran of the Kane County Public Defender's Office was selected by a majority of the Circuit Judges.

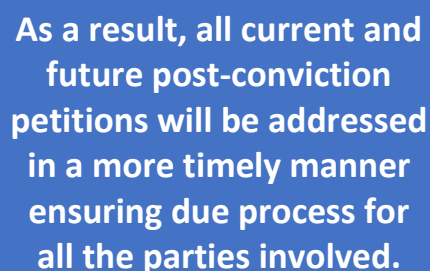
An Interpreter Coordinator position was created and filled

The Sixteenth Judicial Circuit is committed to ensuring access to the justice system for people with limited English proficiency and hearing-impaired individuals. In 2020, the decision was made to hire our first full-time interpreter coordinator in November. The creation of this position will significantly enhance the quality of the interpreters being utilized throughout the Circuit while working closely with the Administrative Office of Illinois Courts to seek reimbursement for these services.

Post-Conviction Project

The Post-Conviction Hearing Act ([725 ILCS 5/122-1, et seq.](#)) allows for a defendant to collaterally attack their conviction by asserting a denial of a federal or state constitutional right. In 2020, 73 Post-Conviction Petitions were pending. Of those 73 cases, 39 of those defendants were convicted of first-degree murder.

The Kane County Public Defender's Office was appointed to represent approximately 80% of these cases. Judges, with the help of the Public Defender's Office and the Kane County State's Attorney's Office reviewed each of the pending post-conviction petitions. After review, recommendations were made and implemented to organize and streamline the post-conviction process.



As a result, all current and future post-conviction petitions will be addressed in a more timely manner ensuring due process for all the parties involved.

Judges developed publications on pandemic courtroom operations and jury trials, shared with Circuits throughout the state

- [Guidelines for Virtual Courtroom Proceedings of the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit](#)
- [Guidelines for Jury Trials in the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit Due to COVID-19 Pandemic: Criminal Division Recommendations | Civil Division Recommendations](#)

Kane County Law Library Director secured a \$19,500 award granted to the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit

This grant was awarded to be spent on fulfilling the needs of self-represented litigants within its community. Additionally, the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit was awarded a full-time Illinois Justice Corps Fellow, who is based within Kane County Law Library & Self Help Legal Center. This Fellow assisted self-represented litigants with Zoom court, e-filing, legal aid referrals, and other procedural matters.



Specialty Courts

Drug Rehabilitation Court (DRC) received a \$500,000 grant

The Kane County DRC received a \$500,000 three-year federal grant to enhance operations. This was the third consecutive three-year grant received by Kane County.



DRC 20th Anniversary

Kane County DRC celebrated its 20-year anniversary. Since 2000, 870 participants have successfully graduated from the program.

Veterans Treatment Court (VTC)

The Kane County Veterans Treatment Court was created in 2018. VTC celebrated its first graduate in 2020.



Court Divisions

Civil

Since March 2020, it has been the goal and focus of the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit Civil Division to continue civil litigation operations while maintaining the health and safety of the public, employees and staff of the building. The Kane County Courthouse (3rd Street Courthouse) has been closed to the general public since mid-December 2020.



While most of the civil judges have been in the building on a daily basis during that time, all of the judges have full remote capabilities to work outside of the courthouse, if necessary. Mastering the ability to work remotely has been a smooth transition and continues to work well in the Civil Division.

The Civil Division has experienced and conquered many technological advances this past year. With the exception of jury trials and mediations, all other processes and procedures related to daily civil litigation continues to occur through remote access and the use of Zoom. Each courtroom is able to accommodate joint appearances (i.e., live participants in combination with remote participants). The hope is to be able to begin remote mediations in the very near future.

Additionally, the Civil Division has transitioned to electronic court orders in almost all of the courtrooms this past year. Attorneys and litigants soon will be asked to submit proposed orders through the e-file system which will increase efficiency for all.

Family

The Family Division judges faced significant challenges in 2020 as a result of the pandemic in insuring that the needs of the families served were met. However, with the technology made available during this time and the cooperation of its justice partners, the Family Division acted quickly to make sure that cases could move forward in a remote fashion through a number of [Administrative Orders](#). These Orders created a protocol for:



- In-person hearing of all Emergency matters;
- Conducting remote Pre-trial conferences with counsel;
- Conducting remote hearings with counsel and their clients;
- Creating remote motion and status calls;
- Initiating the ability to finalize Dissolution proceedings by allowing the submittal of affidavits to support the proofs;
- Conducting trials in a remote fashion.

The above initiatives avoided a backlog of Family Division cases and created a virtual court environment whereby all Family Division matters could be handled in a remote fashion. With this, the Family Division judges worked to ensure that the additional cases and issues raised by the effect of the pandemic on families were litigated and resolved in an accessible and efficient manner. The change in protocol required the judges to create and/or sign court orders remotely, to review emailed prove-up documents, and to receive and admit exhibits for hearing sent via email.

Although both conflict and divorce filings increased due to the effects of the pandemic, the judges worked hard to ensure that both represented and self-represented litigants were served. The Family Division also ensured that all updates and protocols were communicated in a timely fashion to the attorneys through weekly Zoom meetings with the Presiding Judge to address emerging issues and concerns.

Felony

A year like no other, 2020 saw a pandemic change almost completely how the felony division operates. Early on, Chief Judge Hull challenged the felony judges with the task of continuing the operation of the criminal justice system, while at the same time ensuring the health and safety of all involved. Remote court calls were designed and implemented. Safe jury trials were researched and designed. Procedures were created to keep all staff healthy. The felony judges had to learn and become proficient at Zoom staggered court calls, new approaches to nearly every historic procedure, and how to help keep all safe and healthy. Like the true professionals they are, the judges rose to the task and in the end, the cases were processed efficiently, jury trials were conducted, very few staff became ill, and justice was done.



Misdemeanor & Traffic

The Misdemeanor & Traffic Division consists of five courtrooms housed among four different buildings across the county. During a normal calendar week, the division typically services



hundreds of individual defendants. Beginning in March 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the entire Sixteenth Judicial Circuit suspended its normal operations in order to focus on the health and safety of the public, employees and courthouse staff. Although the four courthouse locations were closed to the public until June 2020, the division began hearing cases remotely in mid-April. All of the judges were trained in, and their respective courtrooms equipped with, full remote capabilities to handle their weekly caseloads via Zoom. The largest hurdle faced was finding the best way of effectively communicating court continuances and remote appearance instructions with defendants and attorneys.

From July through December 2020 the division ran a hybrid of limited in-person and remote court calls, which focused on eliminating the large, pandemic-caused backlog of cases. This included remotely conducting bench trials, substantive evidentiary hearings and entering guilty pleas. With each courtroom able to accommodate in-person and remote appearances, the division was well prepared for and stayed fully operational during the second forced shutdown of courthouses in December 2020.

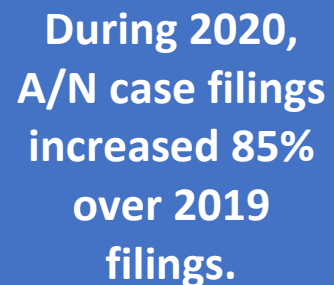
The success in expanding remote hearings allowed the division, now and for the future, to provide the community with better service and eliminate the often unnecessary and burdensome effect routine court appearances place on many defendants for relatively minor offenses.

Juvenile

The Juvenile Division hears juvenile abuse, neglect and dependency cases (A/N), juvenile delinquency (JD) cases, agency and private adoption cases (AD), and a limited number of guardianship (P) matters. There are currently two judges assigned to hear Juvenile Division cases.

Abuse and Neglect

The goal of juvenile A/N cases is to ensure children are safe in their homes and to preserve the child's family ties whenever possible. Because of the critical nature of these cases, statutory timeframes for addressing A/N cases were not stayed during the pandemic. While this is understandable due to the need protect children and commence services aimed at family reunification, it was not without its challenges both due to the pandemic and the increase in case filings. To address these challenges, coordinated efforts between attorneys, CASA, child welfare agencies, the Circuit Clerk's Office, parents, foster parents and the Judiciary have been permitting these cases to be addressed during this unprecedented time. Much has been accomplished and even enhanced with the advent of remote access and virtual platforms. Therefore, what was initially extremely challenging now seems almost second nature in terms of how people access judicial proceedings remotely, safely and efficiently.



**During 2020,
A/N case filings
increased 85%
over 2019
filings.**

Juvenile Delinquency

Juvenile Delinquency court is responsible for balancing the need to protect citizens from juvenile crime, addressing the needs of minors who come before the court in order to rehabilitate them and prevent future delinquent behavior. The Juvenile Delinquency Court works closely with Juvenile Court Services, and other providers in the community to assess and address the needs of minors, and in many cases their families as well. The goal of the Juvenile Delinquency Court is to ensure that each minor receives due process, understands his or her rights, and is heard regarding the circumstances that have brought them before the court.

Problem-Solving Courts

Drug Rehabilitation Court

The Kane County Drug Rehabilitation Court (DRC) program seeks to help high-risk individuals who have a substance use disorder and are charged with felony offenses, obtain necessary treatment and rebuild their lives. The drug court team of justice and treatment professionals works in a non-adversarial manner to reduce the incidence of drug use and crimes committed as a result of such use. Drug court is a voluntary program for Kane County residents assessed to meet the target group the program is best able to serve. Participants are required to complete all recommended treatment and are closely supervised by the court. They must regularly appear in court to monitor progress and are frequently drug tested.

The Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 presented many challenges for the program, the treatment providers, and the participants. Treatment providers were unable to accept individuals for inpatient treatment at times and most therapy converted to telehealth or remote group therapy. Although drug testing continued throughout the year, testing was modified and more limited in scope in order to protect participants and the probation officers. In addition to urine testing, the program began observed saliva testing to ensure safety. In early April, participants in DRC began appearing weekly in court using Zoom. Due to the pandemic's impact on courthouse operations, the number of applicants to the program dramatically diminished. In 2019, DRC received 75 applications to the program.

Thirty-nine applications were received in 2020.

Treatment Alternative Court (TAC)

Treatment Alternative Court is a program for offenders who have been diagnosed with a serious mental health disorder, co-occurring disorders or developmental disabilities. The program requires mental health treatment, substance use disorder treatment when necessary, and regular supervision from the Court. The program identifies treatment needs and provides services in order to reduce participants contact with the criminal justice system and to promote public safety. TAC is a voluntary program for Kane County residents charged with either a felony or misdemeanor offense. In addition to mental health treatment, participants receive various forms of evidence-based therapy, housing assistance, and benefits assistance while under intensive judicial monitoring.

Despite the challenges of the global pandemic and the necessity for most services to be remote in 2020, the TAC program had 11 successful graduations during the course of the year.

TAC court began operating remotely using Zoom in early April. Drug testing continued with safety precautions in place relying on

many home visits by probation officers and the assistance of our treatment providers. As a consequence of the pandemic, the number of applicants to TAC was reduced. In 2019, TAC received 43 applications. In 2020, 21 applications were received.

Veterans Treatment Court (VTC)

Veterans Treatment Court is the newest problem-solving court in Kane County. In 2018, this program was instituted to recognize that veterans have provided an invaluable service to our nation. In so doing, some may suffer the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, mental health conditions, or substance use disorders that then led to contact with the criminal justice system. This voluntary program is for Kane County

veterans charged with felony or misdemeanor offenses. VTC is a highly structured intervention process for the treatment of eligible participants that brings together substance use professionals, mental health professionals, VA professionals, and local service providers which requires intensive judicial monitoring. In January 2020, the first participant in the program graduated with a ceremony attended by many local veterans. Two other participants were able to graduate during remote ceremonies during the year. Court has been conducted remotely since April and, in an effort to keep everyone safe, home visits with participants significantly increased. The pandemic has limited promotion of this new program in the community. At the end of the year, VTC had three active participants with two pending applications.

Court Administration

Douglas Naughton, Court Administrator | Andrea O'Brien, Deputy Court Administrator

Subject to the direction of the Chief Judge, the Court Administrators of the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit are responsible for the overall management of the court's non-judicial operations and providing support for the judges of the circuit.

The duties fall into two broad categories. The first category is managerial functions. These duties include personnel management, fiscal/budget coordination, public relations, space and equipment/technology management, and long-range planning. The second category deals with areas bearing specifically upon the courts and the public sector. These duties include case flow management, jury management, inter-governmental/inter-departmental relations, interpreting services and monitoring legislation. The office also provides supervision of the Law Library, the Mandatory Arbitration Center and various mediation programs provided by the Court.

The Office of the Court Administrator is dedicated to ensuring equal and timely access to the courts and its related services. Supervision is also provided for judicial internship programs, website management and coordinated outside activities such as regional and national level mock trial competitions in our court facilities.

Arbitration Center

Mary Barnette, Arbitration Center Administrator

All civil actions exclusively for money damages that are filed in an amount exceeding \$10,000.00, but not greater than \$50,000.00, are automatically assigned to non-binding mandatory arbitration. The day-to-day management

of the program is the responsibility of the Arbitration Center Administrator. For most of 2020, the Arbitration Center was closed due to the pandemic. The Court did not have the capability to conduct remote arbitration hearings via Zoom.

341 new arbitration cases opened

281 arbitration cases closed

The Arbitration Center conducted 58 hearings

Bailiffs

Nancy Hudson, Chief Bailiff | Kane County Judicial Center
Lan Nielsen, Chief Bailiff | Kane County Courthouse

The Bailiffs of the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit have the greatest direct personal contact with attorneys, litigants, juries and the public. Bailiffs serve a vital role as the face of the judiciary.

They help promote and encourage the public’s confidence and respect for the judicial system through their presence and behavior in the courtroom.

In 2020, the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit employed 21 full-time Bailiffs, one part-time Bailiff and several Seasonal Bailiffs. Their primary responsibilities are to maintain order and decorum within the courtroom, and to ensure that all orders from the bench are carried out. Additionally, they assist jurors in their duties to the court, they provide the first line of security and information to jurors and they keep jurors free from contact with anyone not authorized to be in their presence. Bailiffs also provide public information and non-legal directions to parties, attorneys and litigants to assure timely court participation.

Children's Waiting Room

Ann Lobb, Waiting Room Director



The Children’s Waiting Room provides free drop-off short-term, supervised care for as many as 20 children ranging in ages from infant to age 12. The hours of operation are 8:15 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8:15 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Fridays. There are extended hours on Wednesdays for Night and Drug Courts.

children while their parents or guardians appeared in court.

During 2020, the Children’s Waiting Room was closed for most of the year. However, in the brief time it was open, it served 198

Court Reporting Services

Jill Gasparaitis, Court Reporter Supervisor

Court Reporting Services employees capture the verbatim record of the courtroom proceedings presented in the Felony, Misdemeanor, Juvenile, Specialty Court, and Mental Health courtrooms of the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit.

Currently the State of Illinois has appointed to this circuit 17 Official Court Reporters who report to the Chief Judge. All of the reporters are licensed Certified Shorthand Reporters (CSR) by the Illinois Department of Financial & Professional Regulation. In addition, there are five reporters who are certified through Illinois CSR testing or testing through the National Court Reporters Association as Realtime reporters who are able to report and provide instant translation when required; for example, to assist a hearing-impaired individual in the legal process.



In addition to capturing the proceedings, the court reporters are responsible for preparing transcripts when ordered to assist in the trial court process as well as for appellate court review.

Interpreting Services & Language Access

Victor Tellez, Interpreter Coordinator

The Sixteenth Judicial Circuit is committed to ensuring access to the judicial system for people with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and hearing-impaired individuals. To that end, the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit created the position of Interpreting Coordinator. The role of the Interpreting Coordinator is to staff each courtroom with the highest quality interpreters, while maximizing the interpreting reimbursements provided by the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts (AOIC).

In addition, as the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit has adapted to conducting court remotely during the pandemic, it has partnered with the AOIC to continue to provide certified interpreters via Zoom to assist LEP parties. The Sixteenth Judicial Circuit's focus has been on continuing to ensure that LEP litigants are able to participate in court proceedings using either consecutive or simultaneous interpretation in conjunction with the Zoom application.

Jury Commission

Mari Moore and Judy Lyday, Jury Commission Clerks

The Office of the Jury Commission is responsible for the preparation of the general jury list, summoning, selection, drawing, examination and verification of persons for jury service. Illinois law requires that the names of prospective jurors be randomly drawn from a combined list of registered voters, Illinois driver's license holders 18 years of age and older, Illinois Disabled Person Identification Card holders, Illinois Identification Card holders and claimants for unemployment insurance.

In 2020, a total of 15,207 jurors were summoned for jury duty. Despite the pandemic, there were three civil jury trials conducted at the Kane County Courthouse and 29 jury trials conducted at the Kane County Judicial Center.

Mediation Programs

Kevin Malone, Program Director

The Sixteenth Judicial Circuit Mediation Programs provide a confidential process in which a neutral mediator assists parties in reaching a mutually acceptable agreement. Mediation is intended to be a more informal and non-adversarial process where the mediator will assist the parties in identifying issues, fostering joint problem-solving, exploring settlement alternatives and reaching an agreement. The Sixteenth Judicial Circuit has four Mediation Programs: Civil, Family, Residential Foreclosure, and Child Protection.

Orders of Protection

Staff Attorneys and Paralegals

The Sixteenth Judicial Circuit Court assists self-represented litigants with emergency orders Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Kane County Judicial Center. Judicial Staff Attorneys and Paralegals provide assistance with filling out Petitions for Emergency Orders of Protection, Civil No Contact Orders and Stalking No Contact Orders.

In total, the Court assisted 1008 Petitioners seeking Orders of Protection

Individuals who sought Orders of Protection came from 55 different municipalities

56 different agencies, including police departments and victim advocacy agencies, referred Petitioners to the Court during 2020

Kane County Law Library & Self Help Legal Center

Halle Cox, Law Library Director

The mission of the Kane County Law Library & Self Help Legal Center (KCLL) is to ensure that everyone has equal and open access to the legal system. By assisting court patrons in their efforts to use the legal system effectively and efficiently, the law library staff helps to create informed legal consumers and empower court patrons.



Through hosting programs such as a Divorce & Family Law Help call-in service, Lawyer in the Law Library, and Lawyer in the Library at the Gail Borden Public Library, KCLL brings volunteering attorneys together with those in the community who could most benefit from legal guidance. KCLL recently instituted an online chat service to complement the existing telephone and email reference services.

Boy Scout Law Merit Badge Day

During non-pandemic times, the Law Library hosts the Boy Scout Law Merit Badge Day in March each year. In this event, 30 registered Boy Scouts of 1st Class or higher earn their



law merit badge in a packed day of meeting with Assistant State Attorneys, the President of the Bar Association, a Kane County Sheriff canine unit Deputy, Judges, Public Defenders, attorneys from local Legal Aid agencies, and private attorneys. The day is capped off by the Boy Scouts participating in a mock trial with volunteering judges, court reporters, bailiffs and private attorneys.

Family Reading Night with the Judges



Every year in conjunction with the Illinois State Library's Family Reading Night, the Law Library hosts Family Reading Night with the Judges. In this event, children in second grade or younger from throughout the community, and their care-givers, are invited to wear their pajamas and listen to judges read their favorite bedtime stories.

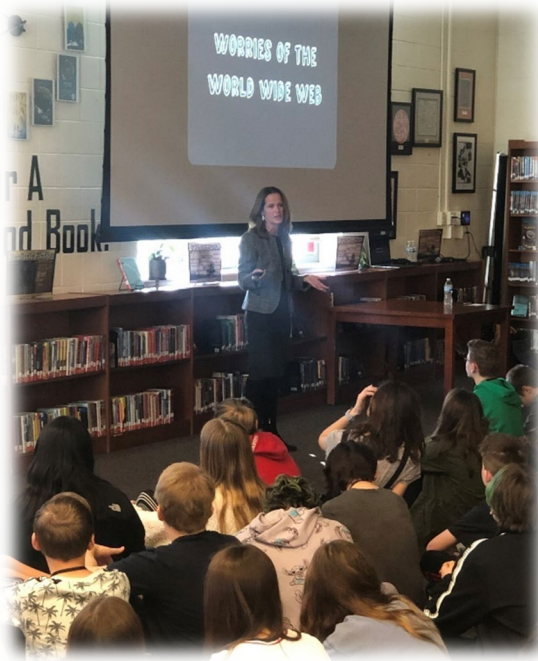
The evening concludes with a tour of a courtroom where there is a photo opportunity for the kids to get their pictures taken sitting behind the judge's bench.



Court Programs and Activities

The Judges of the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit are proud to offer and facilitate these programs, shedding light on important concerns for young people and offering them an inside look at the legal system.

Worries of the World Wide Web

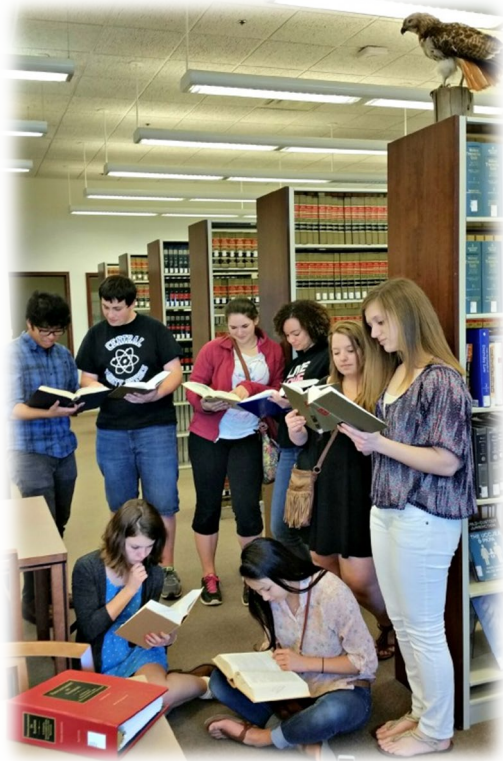


Worries of the World Wide Web is a program that addresses the increasing problem of cyber bullying, electronic harassment, and sexting/pornography. The program is directed toward middle school students and speaks to the social and legal consequences of this potentially criminal behavior. The program is meant to increase the awareness of what cyber bullying, harassment, and sexting are and how it may impact the lives of those students who participate in this type of activity. Sixteenth Circuit Court judges created the program in response to middle school teachers expressing their students were being negatively impacted by the use of social media. During 2016-2017, the Illinois Judges Association worked with the Sixteen Circuit Court judges to expand the program statewide.

Mock Trials

The Sixteenth Judicial Circuit, in conjunction with the Kane County Bar Association and St. Charles North High School, annually hosts two high school Mock Trials competitions. The Mock Trials allow students the opportunity to present cases in a courtroom and in front of Sixteenth Judicial Circuit judges. For the past several years, the Judicial Center has also been a host site for the American Mock Trial Association's opening championship round. This college mock trial tournament hosts about two dozen teams from around the county and provides a full weekend of mock trial competitions.





School Visitation

Court facilities are available for in-circuit school field trips. These visits offer groups the opportunity to see firsthand the operations and inner workings of the many components of the justice system. To schedule a visit to the Judicial Center, contact the Court Administration Office.

7 Reasons to Leave the Party

7 Reasons to Leave the Party is a program directed to teenagers with the goal to alter their perception

about what is “cool.” The Illinois Judge’s Association adopted the program to inform middle school and high school-aged audiences seven reasons why they should leave, or not attend, a party where drugs and/or alcohol are present. It informs the students about the legal and personal consequences of drinking and driving, taking drugs, and having underage sex. Judges in the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit have been presenting the program to local schools since 2009, and have adapted the program to include the use of technology for sexting and bullying.

Teen Comments

"It wasn't just a bunch of adults blowing smoke. This is what really happens."

"I liked the stories they told us. It really makes you realize that this stuff can happen to you, not just other people."

"I liked how interactive and energetic it was. I liked how honest it was."

2020 in Photos

Kane County Courts

16th Judicial Circuit

Kane County, Illinois



Elgin Branch Court



Kane County Branch Court (Traffic)



Kane County Courthouse (3rd St. Courthouse)



Kane County Judicial Center



Aurora Branch Court



Juvenile Justice Center

We're all in this together!

