

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



ALLEGAN COUNTY PROBATE COURT



*Hon. Michael L. Buck
Amy Cornell
Avery D. Rose
Jennifer Callaway
Jennifer White*

Meet the Probate Staff



(Pictured from left to right: Jenni Callaway, Jennifer White, Judge Buck, Amy Cornell, and Avery Rose).

Mission Statement

The mission of the Allegan County Probate Court is to administer justice with fairness, equality, and integrity, to resolve matters before the court in a timely manner, and to provide courteous and prompt service in a manner that inspires trust and confidence.

Goals

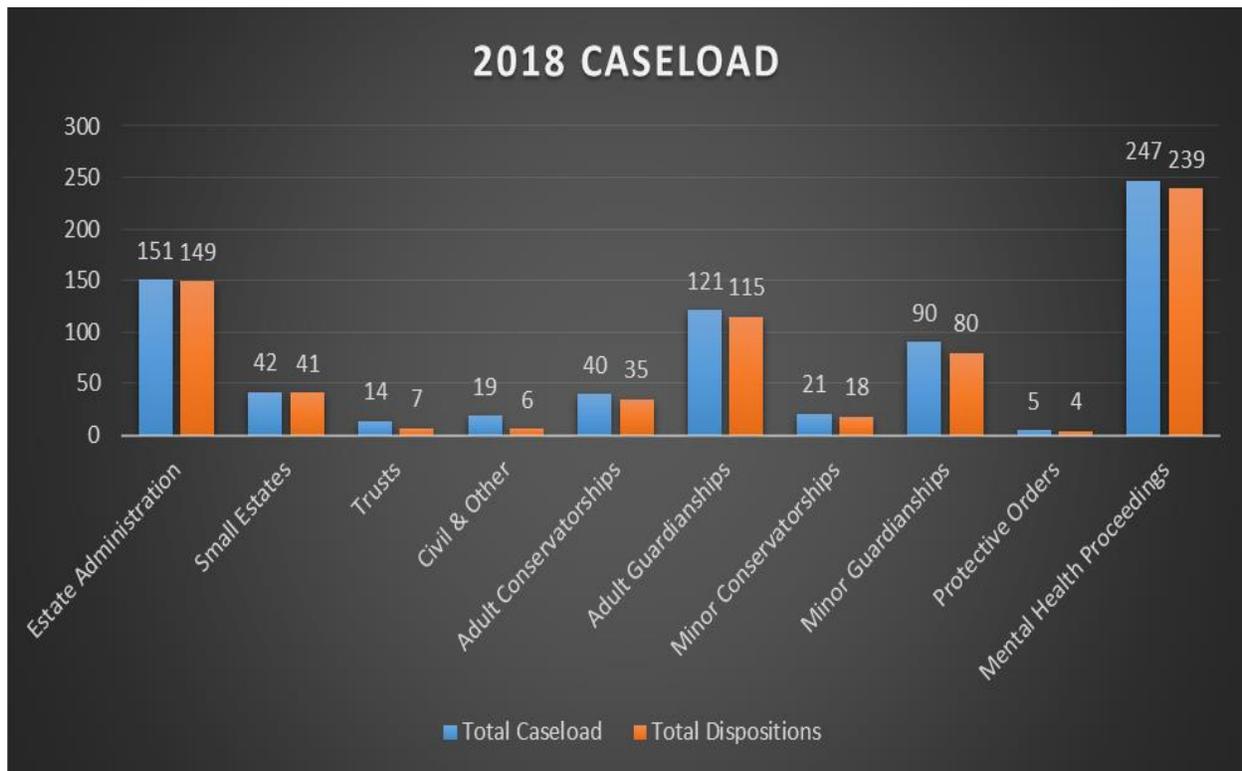
- To process all matters within the time guidelines set by the State Court Administrative Office
- To ensure the compliance of Court-appointed fiduciaries with statutes and courts rules, in order to safeguard protected individuals and their property
- To efficiently process and adjudicate all matters before the Court
- To provide excellent customer service to all those with business before the Court

Probate Court Authority

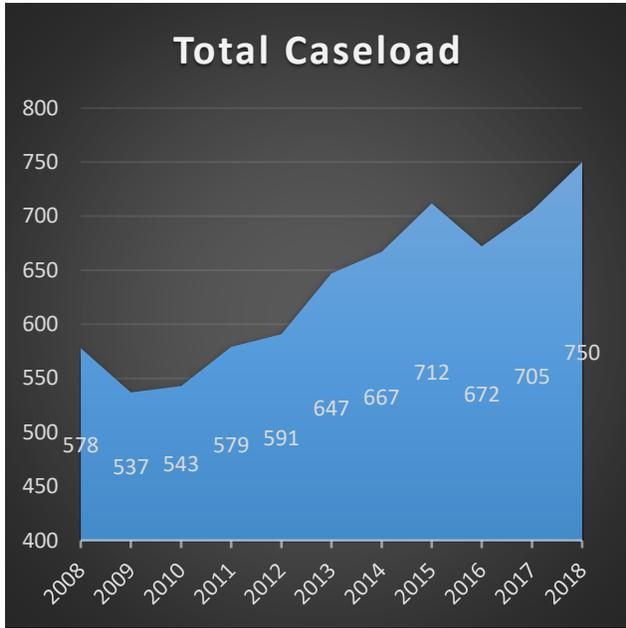
Article VI Section 15 of the Michigan Constitution provides that “the jurisdiction, powers and duties of the probate court and of the judges thereof shall be provided by law.” Through the promulgation of the Estates and Protected Individuals Code (EPIC), the Mental Health Code, and other acts, the legislature has conferred jurisdiction to the Probate Court over:

- Decedent Estate Proceedings
- Civil Actions
- Trust Proceedings
- Minor Guardianship Proceedings
- Guardianships of Incapacitated Individuals
- Protective Orders
- Conservatorships
- Guardianships of Individuals with Developmental Disabilities
- Involuntary Commitments of Mentally Ill Persons
- Drain Appeals

Probate Court Caseload



In 2018 there were a total of 750 new and pending cases handled by the Probate Court, the majority of which were comprised of decedents’ estates (151), mental health proceedings (247), adult guardianships (121) and minor guardianships (90).

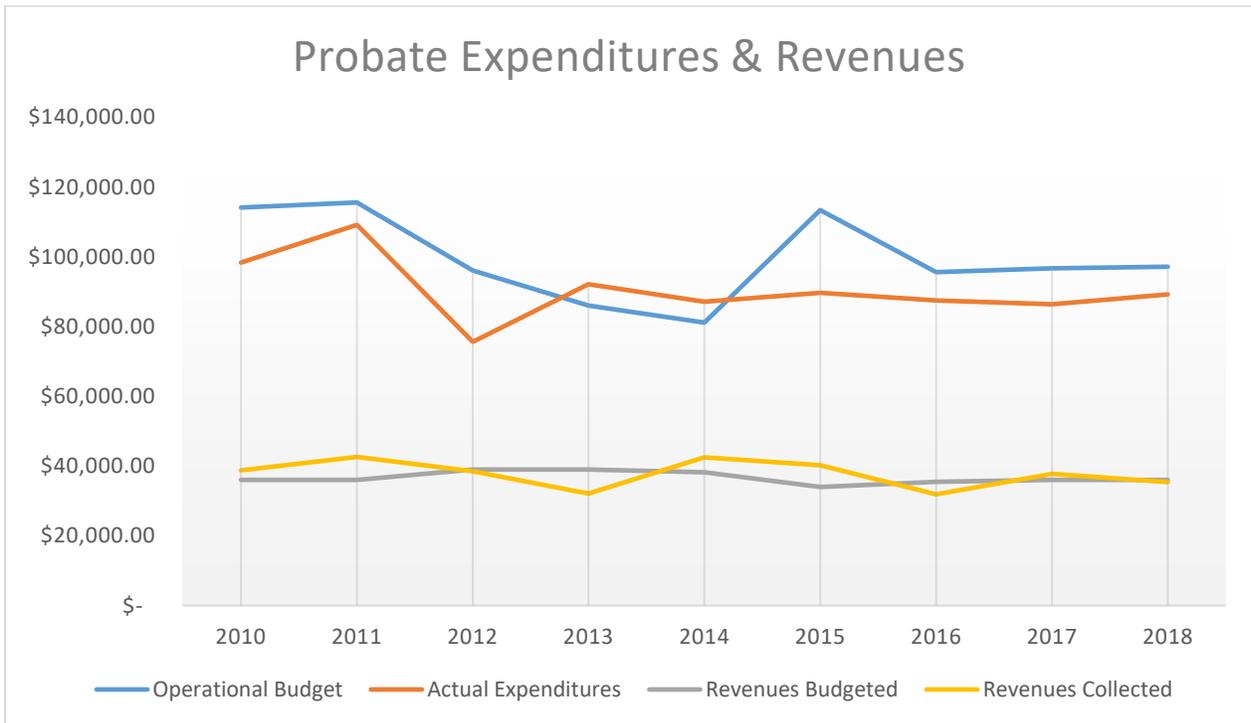


Caseload Trends

Notwithstanding the decreases in overall caseload in 2009 and 2016, the Probate Court has consistently observed an increase in the number of cases it handles each year. There were 578 new and pending cases handled by the Court in 2008 and 750 in 2018, which represents a 30% increase in overall caseload. Most notably, in the last five years, the number of adult guardianship cases handled by the Court has increased by 47%, and new mental health filings have increased by 33%.

Expenditures

Below is a chart showing the allocated operational budget for the Probate Court, actual expenditures, revenues budgeted and the actual revenues collected from 2010 to 2018. Over the past five years, an average operational budget of \$96,789 was allocated to the Court. During that same period, the Court spent an average of \$87,957 per year.



Revenues

Although most of the Probate Court's revenues are dependent on filing fees and requests for copies, during the past five years the Court has collected an average of \$37,564 per year, and exceeded the average amount it has budgeted for revenue collection over that period of time, which was \$35,950.00.

PROBATE REVENUES						
Year	Misc Fees	Probate Court Fees	Petition Fee	Certified Copies	Budgeted	Amount Collected
2010	5,024.07	23,163.37	5,500.00	5,083.00	36,000.00	38,770.44
2011	4,335.29	27,996.60	5,357.40	4,924.00	36,000.00	42,613.29
2012	5,657.72	22,858.40	5,198.80	4,760.40	39,000.00	38,475.32
2013	708.52	21,061.18	4,916.04	5,419.60	39,000.00	32,105.34
2014	5,131.04	25,608.96	5,800.99	5,985.38	38,250.00	42,526.37
2015	1,438.00	28,021.11	5,910.60	4,864.35	34,000.00	40,234.06
2016	811.45	22,853.84	4,638.22	3,587.00	35,500.00	31,890.51
2017	338.18	27,412.05	5,195.45	4,833.75	36,000.00	37,779.43
2018	4,085.49	22,832.18	4,122.00	4,351.00	36,000.00	35,390.67
Average	3,058.86	24,645.30	5,182.17	4,867.61	36,638.89	37,753.94

Attorney Fee Recovery for Mental Health Proceedings

Last year the Court began utilizing a free online accounting tool geared toward small businesses called **Wave**. This website has assisted the Court in generating and tracking invoices for reimbursement of the attorney fees it pays in connection with mental health proceedings. The Court successfully collected a total of \$4,053.25 in 2018. As of May 2019, the Court has already recovered \$5,503.42 in attorney fees.

DiSC Training

In March of this year the Probate Staff participated in a DiSC program training, which was provided by Executive Director of Human Services, Vickie Herzberg. In addition to being a fascinating subject, the training assisted Probate staff with:

- Increasing their self-knowledge: how each person responds to conflict, what motivates them, what causes them stress, and how they solve problems
- Improving working relationships by recognizing the communication needs of coworkers
- Facilitating better teamwork
- Developing stronger customer service skills by identifying and responding to customer styles

2018 Public Satisfaction Survey

Every two years the Probate Court distributes a public satisfaction survey to the public, in coordination with the Circuit and District Courts. The survey is developed by the State Court Administrative Office, and assists the Probate Court in identifying its strengths, providing positive feedback to employees, and targeting areas for improvement.



In the Court's last survey, 100% of court users agreed or strongly agreed that they were treated with courtesy and respect by court staff. Court users also overwhelmingly indicated that they

were able to get their business done in a reasonable amount of time and that their cases were handled fairly.

Below are a sample of comments the Court received from members of the public in the 2018 public satisfaction survey:

“Very fast and efficient.”

– Family/friend of party to case

“Work well with Probate Judge & staff.”

– Agency Worker

“Fast and friendly.”

– Personal Representative of an Estate

The results of the survey, notes from the public and other feedback indicate that the Probate Court continues to maintain high levels of public satisfaction. The Court plans to administer another public satisfaction survey in 2020.

Current Information and Key Contacts

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