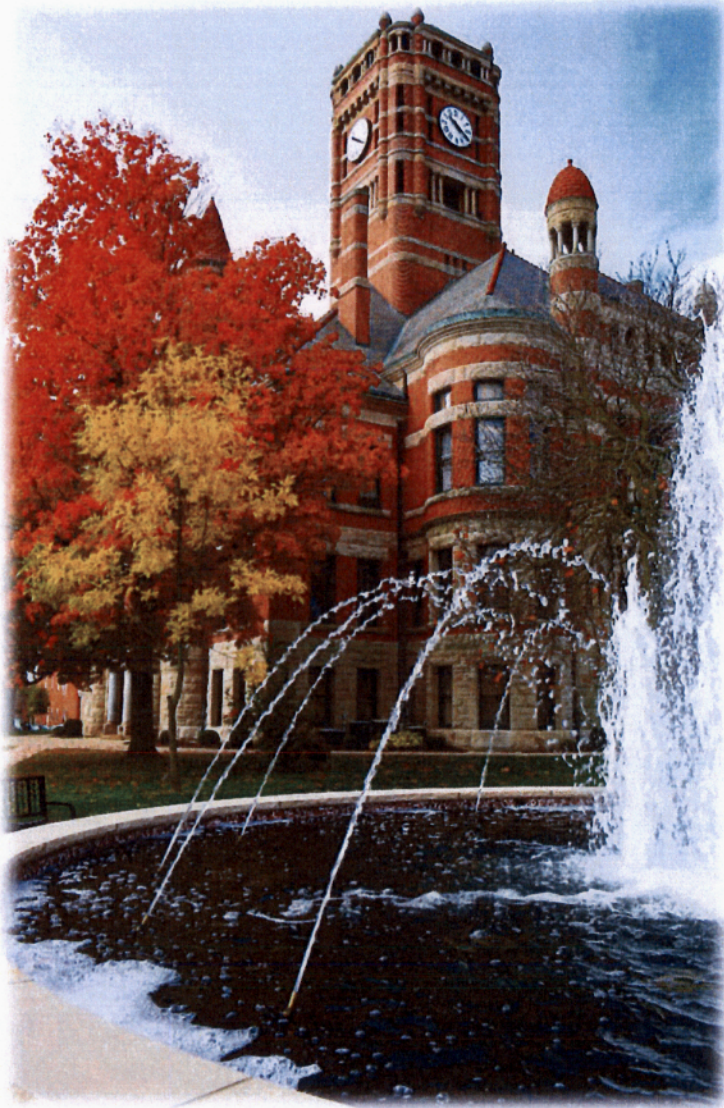


WILLIAMS COUNTY COMMON PLEAS COURT JUVENILE DIVISION



2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Karen K. Gallagher, Judge

KAREN K. GALLAGHER
Judge



RONDA MUEHLFELD
Court Administrator

WILLIAMS COUNTY COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
PROBATE AND JUVENILE DIVISIONS

January 30, 2025

Williams County Commissioners
Scott Lirot, slirot@wmsco.org
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4545 Fisher Rd.
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Amy L. Ast, Director

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In compliance with section 2151.18 of the Ohio Revised Code, I submit the 2024 Annual Report of the Williams County Common Pleas Court, Juvenile Division. We hope that you find this Report informative as to the number and kinds of cases that come before the Court, and the services that we use to assist our youth and families while striving to protect the community.

Respectfully Submitted,

Karen K. Gallagher, Judge

WILLIAMS COUNTY COMMON PLEAS COURT JUVENILE DIVISION



The Honorable Karen K. Gallagher
Juvenile & Probate Judge

Emma Kolb, Deputy Clerk
Susan Sheets, Deputy Clerk
Peyton Botek, Deputy Clerk
Melissa Short, Deputy Clerk
Brianne Young, Deputy Clerk
Alaina Russell, Probation Clerk
Gary Mohre, Diversion Officer
Michael Polley, Probation Officer
John Karacson, Probation Officer
Alexandra Jacoby, FIC Coordinator
Annie Zervos, Administrative Assistant
Ronda Muehlfeld, Court Administrator

A MESSAGE FROM JUDGE GALLAGHER

***“CHALLENGES ARE WHAT MAKE LIFE INTERESTING AND
OVERCOMING THEM IS WHAT MAKES LIFE MEANINGFUL”***

In 2024, we continued to make measurable positive impact on the juveniles and families in our county in the areas of mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment, reductions in school truancy, changing criminogenic behaviors and developing effective relationships in families and with others that have important roles in the lives of our youth. We continue the rehabilitation efforts that we have found to be successful and have added additional programs as we have identified the needs of the community. The Court staff has maintained very good relationships with service providers, agencies, the schools and individuals that provide resources to our families. I am very proud of our staff in their innovation and dedication. We are blessed to have such committed individuals as part of the Court's team.

We are grateful for our collaboration with each school district, superintendent and school staff in our county; with the clinical service and mental health providers within our community; Dr. Diane Peters; Williams County Job and Family Services; Family and Children's First Council; the Sheriff's Department and officers; all Chief of Police and law enforcement in Williams County; Williams County Commissioners; Williams County Prosecutor and staff, Northwest Ohio Juvenile Detention, Training and Rehabilitation Center; Northwest Ohio Juvenile Residential Center; The Ohio Department Of Youth Services; Northwest Ohio CASA; Northwest Ohio Mediation Services; Richard Altman and Maumee Valley Dispute Resolution, LLC; The Ohio State University Extension Office; the Williams County Bar Association; and the members of the Advisory Committee and Treatment Team for the Court's Specialized Dockets. We thank each of these agencies and individuals for their service, commitment and partnership with the Court.

We look forward to the new year. We will continue to work to overcome the barriers we face and make a difference in the lives of the families and youth in our county.

SUMMARY OF CASES FILED IN 2024

The Juvenile Division of the Common Pleas Court has the responsibility to hear and determine all cases concerning children in Williams County. In **2024**, there were **635** charges/complaints and/or new cases filed. This total includes: **133** delinquent child charges/complaints; **36** unruly child complaints; **103** juvenile traffic charges/complaints; **57** abuse, neglect, or dependency cases; **15** permanent custody cases; **12** adult contributing cases; **19** adult failure to send cases; and **260** cases involving the allocation of parental rights/parenting time, child support, paternity, and legal custody cases.

DELINQUENCY CASES: Any child under the age of 18 who violates any state or federal law or any local ordinance or regulation, which violation would be a crime if committed by an adult, or any child who violates any lawful Court Order is adjudicated a delinquent child. In **2024**, **133** delinquency complaints were filed. Of the **133** complaints filed, **30** were based on felony charges, **70** were misdemeanor charges, **24** were community control violations, and **9** were violations of a Court Order.

Ages	Male	Female	Total
10	0	1	1
11	9	1	10
12	1	2	3
13	8	6	14
14	9	10	19
15	14	6	20
16	20	10	30
17	28	6	34
18	0	2	2

Residency	Total
Alvordton	3
Bryan	50
Edgerton	4
Edon	0
Holiday City	0
Kunkle	1
Montpelier	35
Pioneer	13
Stryker	5
West Unity	6
Other	16

Charges	Total	Charges	Total
Aggravated Menacing	3	Obstruction of Business	2
Assault	22	Off. Involving Minors	1
Attempted Breaking & Entering	1	Pandering Sexually Oriented Matter	3
Breaking & Entering	4	Public Indecency	1
Community Control Violation	24	Rape	1
Criminal Damaging	3	Resisting Arrest	2
Criminal Mischief	2	Sexual Imposition	1
Disorderly Conduct	15	Strangulation	2
Felonious Assault	1	Telephone Harassment	1
Gross Sexual Imposition	1	Theft	12
Illegal Conveyance of Weapons	1	Underage Alcohol Law	6
Illegal Use of Minor Material	3	Vandalism	7
Inducing Panic	3	Delinquent Child (Violation of Court Order)	9
Menacing	2		

UNRULY CASES: Any child who is not under the reasonable control of a parent, teacher or guardian by being habitually disobedient; a child that is a habitual truant from school; a child that behaves in a manner to injure or endanger the child's own health or morals or the health or morals of others; or any child who violates a law that is applicable only to children, is an unruly child. In 2024, 36 unruly complaints were filed. Out of the 36 unruly complaints filed, 14 were for habitual truancy, 21 were for an educational review hearing and 1 was a transferred case.

AGES	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
6	1	0	1
7	1	0	1
8	1	0	1
9	0	0	0
10	1	1	2
11	3	1	4
12	1	0	1
13	2	2	4
14	2	0	2
15	2	1	3
16	4	4	8
17	4	5	9

RESIDENCY	TOTAL
Alvordton	0
Bryan	7
Edgerton	4
Edon	2
Montpelier	15
Pioneer	3
Stryker	0
West Unity	5
Other	0

JUVENILE TRAFFIC CASES: A child who violates any traffic law, traffic ordinance or traffic regulation of the state or local political subdivision is a juvenile traffic offender. The Court has exclusive jurisdiction over all juvenile traffic cases. In 2024, 95 juveniles were issued traffic citations resulting in 103 charges.

AGES	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
15	1	0	1
16	11	9	20
17	50	24	74

RESIDENCY	TOTAL
Blakeslee	1
Bryan	25
Edgerton	6
Edon	6
Montpelier	18
Pioneer	7
Stryker	2
West Unity	4
Other	26

CHARGE	TOTAL	CHARGE	TOTAL
A.C.D.A	10	Operate Without Valid License	2
Disobey Traffic Control Device	2	Probationary License	3
Expired Plates	2	Red Light	1
Lights After Dark	1	Right Of Way	3
Loud Exhaust	1	Seatbelt	8
Overtake & Pass	1	Starting & Backing	5
Failure to Control	12	Speed	43
Failure to Register	1	Stop for School Bus	3
Failure to Yield	1	Stop Sign Violation	2
Marked Lanes	1	Turns at Intersection	1

FAILURE TO SEND: No parent, guardian, or other person having care of a child of compulsory school age shall violate any provision of the Ohio Revised Code regarding school attendance. The Court may require a person convicted of violating this provision to give bond in a sum of not more than five hundred dollars, conditioned that the person will cause the child under the person's authority to attend school as provided by the law, and remain as a student in school during the term prescribed by law. In **2024**, **19** adult failure to send charges were filed.

TRUANCY CASES: Williams County, in collaboration with the school districts, have countywide truancy officers through the Juvenile Probation Department. With the assistance of each school within the county, juveniles and their families were provided alternatives to adjudication options, including truancy mediation. For the **2023-2024** school year, the truancy officers attended **83** absence intervention meetings at the school districts within the county. **63** student/parents were referred to truancy mediation. **63** students/parents attended truancy mediation. Truancy mediation was not successful in **14** cases and students/parents were required to appear in Court.

CONTRIBUTING TO UNRULINESS OR DELINQUENCY OF A CHILD: No person, including a parent, guardian, or other custodian of a child, shall violate any provision of the Ohio Revised Code regarding contributing to the unruliness or delinquency of a child. In **2024**, **12** adult contributing cases were filed. Of the cases filed, **11** involved contributing to the child(ren) being truant and **1** was contributing to unlawful behavior.

ABUSE, NEGLECT, AND DEPENDENCY: Cases of abuse, neglect, and dependency are filed by the Williams County Department of Job and Family Services. The Court appoints a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), or an attorney as the Guardian Ad Litem for the child(ren) in these cases. In **2024**, **57** abuse, neglect, and/or dependency complaints were filed.

PERMANENT CUSTODY: The Court has jurisdiction to determine motions for permanent custody that requests the termination of parental rights of both parents. The Order of a child into the permanent custody of the Williams County Department of Job and Family Services places the child in a position to be considered for adoption. There were **15** motions for permanent custody filed in the Court in **2024**.

ALLOCATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS/PARENTING TIME/PARENTAGE CASES: The Court has jurisdiction to hear the allocation of parental rights/custody/visitation cases involving children who are born to unmarried parents and not under another Court's jurisdiction. In **2024**, **87** allocation of parental rights/custody/visitation/parentage cases were filed or reopened.

SUPPORT CASES: The Court has jurisdiction to hear a motion for an order of child support/health insurance coverage of any child, if the child is not a ward of another Court of this state. In **2024**, **173** support cases were filed or reopened.

TRENDS
FOR THE WILLIAMS COUNTY COMMON PLEAS COURT,
JUVENILE DIVISION

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Youth Charged with Delinquency	105	144	157	141*	133*
Motion for Violation of Community Control	-	-	-	25*	24*
Youth Charged with Unruliness	20	4	15	21	36
Juvenile Traffic Violations	99	113	124	105	103
Bed Days Used at NWOJDT&R Center	563	2207	2051	2613	1924
Youth Detained at Juvenile Detention Center	27	71	79	87	72
Abuse, Neglect, or Dependent Cases	62	38	101	81	57
Permanent Custody Cases	1	0	0	4	15
Adult Contributing Cases	2	32	15	23	12
Adult Failure to Send	32	39	34	28	19
Juveniles Committed to DYS	0	0	3	0	2

*In the year's prior to 2023, the total Delinquency number included Community Control (Probation) Violations. In 2023, the Motions for Community Control Violations were separated into its own category.

2023 PROGRAMS & SERVICES FOR WILLIAMS COUNTY

YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

JUVENILE PROBATION DEPARTMENT: The Williams County Juvenile Probation department strives to hold juvenile offenders accountable for delinquent and unruly activity, while providing referrals to resources that reduce criminal behavior, and increase the ability of youth to live productively and responsibly in the community. It is the duty of the department to carry out the orders of the Court and serve to protect the interest of the community. Probation Officers are responsible for utilizing all suitable methods to aid juveniles on community control in order to bring about improvement to their conduct. The department recognizes the importance the role the family plays in each youth's response to supervision and therefore requires parents and/or guardians to participate in a youth's treatment plan, as well as other programs to which the youth and family are referred.

The Juvenile Probation Department is staffed by the Court's Administrator, two Probation Officers, a Diversion Officer, the Family Intervention Court Coordinator, and two Probation Clerks. Williams County Juvenile Probation Officers each manage a caseload of juvenile offenders and are responsible for ensuring compliance with Court orders, assessing juvenile's needs, initiating referrals to appropriate agencies, and maintaining related documentation.

Every youth who is placed on community control is required to follow the conditions of community control. These conditions establish the parameters of acceptable behavior for the probationer. Probation Officers enforce the conditions of community control, and if necessary, can file complaints with the Court for community control violations. Each probationer is seen by his/her Probation Officer on a regular basis either at the probation department, at school, or at home.

In **2024**, there were **28** juveniles (**16** males and **12** females) placed on official Community Control. In addition, there were **45** juveniles carried over from the year **2023**. As of **12/31/2024**, there were **43** juveniles released from community control. **32** of those were released successfully. A total of **29** juveniles remained on community control at the end of 2024.

DRUG SCREENING: Urinalysis screening is consistently used by the Court to screen youth for substance use. All juveniles placed on community control are subject to random drug, alcohol and nicotine screening as a condition of their community control. Screening helps to keep youth substance-free and guides the Court on appropriate recommendations for treatment. The Probation Department used a twelve panel instant cup during **2024** testing for cocaine, oxycodone, marijuana, phencyclidine (PCP), methylenedioxymethamphetamine (ecstasy), opiate, benzodiazepine, barbiturate, methadone, amphetamine, methamphetamine, and buprenorphine. The Court also screens for nicotine, LSD, and alcohol use. The Court continues to use a web-based program called Sentry Automated Medical Management, otherwise known as S.A.M.M., to assist in the randomization of drug screens for youth on community control. Youth who have been identified with substance use issues are required to call the S.A.M.M. line every day to determine if they are to complete a drug screen.

LIFE WITHOUT DRUGS: The Life Without Drugs program is a 90-day rehabilitation program provided at the Northwest Ohio Juvenile Detention, Training, and Rehabilitation Center to juveniles who are experiencing alcohol or drug related problems. The Life Without Drugs program educates youth on the disease concept, 12 step support groups, as well as relapse prevention, family origin issues, anger management, coping/decision making skills, and leisure/recreational activities. The on-site therapist conducts in-depth assessments, substance abuse education, group therapy, and individual counseling with the youths placed in the program as well as family engagement sessions. In **2024**, the Court referred **5** juveniles to the program and **2** juveniles had remained in the program at the end of the year. **7** juveniles successfully completed The Life Without Drugs program in **2024**.

ELECTRONIC MONITORING: The Court contracts with the Corrections Center of Northwest Ohio (CCNO) for electronic monitoring services. Electronic Monitored House Arrest is used as an alternative to placing juveniles in a secure detention facility. The equipment used is designed to track an offender's movement in the community providing juveniles the opportunity to experience a structured setting within their home. In **2024**, there were **7** youth placed on Electronic Monitored House Arrest.

COMMUNITY SERVICE: In 2023, the Court began its own Community Service Program, requiring those youth placed on community control to serve a set number of hours of volunteer service within their community. The program has been a success as the Court has partnered with many businesses, agencies and non-profits. In **2024**, **38** youth participated in community service and provided a total of **1,070.50** hours of service to our partners within the county.

VICTIM RESTITUION COMMUNITY SERVICE: In **2024**, the Court received grant funds from the Department of Youth Services to lessen the financial burden for our families. Juveniles are able to earn money to pay off any restitution they may owe by participating in community service. They are able to earn \$10.00 per every hour they participate. **2** juveniles participated in this program for a total of **101** community service hours. **\$1,024.58** was paid in restitution to victims.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE MEDIATION PROGRAM: We began a program in 2022 with Maumee Valley Dispute Resolution, LLC to bring victims and juvenile offenders together to resolve restitution issues. The Court continues to refer juveniles and victims to this program.

ON-CALL: The Probation Department has a Probation Officer on-call at all times. This allows for a Probation Officer to be available to law enforcement officials when juvenile related matters occur within the county. The Judge has given Probation Officers the authority to detain a juvenile or determine an alternative placement, pending a hearing before the Judge on the next business day. Other than the Judge, the Probation Officers are the only individuals permitted to authorize detention for a youth. In **2024**, the Juvenile Probation Department fielded **47** calls from local law enforcement outside of business hours.

FAMILY INTERVENTION COURT: The Court operates two specialized dockets with its Family Intervention Court (FIC). The Court is certified for a Dependency Docket and a Juvenile Treatment Docket. Cases are taken out of the traditional docket and placed in a specialized docket. The purpose is to bring more intensive services to cases with mental health issues, substance abuse issues, or family systems issues. Cases may be referred to the specialized docket from either delinquency cases, or abuse, neglect, dependency cases. Each case is reviewed by a treatment team which consists of individuals from organizations and service providers in Williams County. FIC may accept a maximum of **10** cases for each docket. To successfully complete the process, participants must successfully complete four phases. It is a voluntary program and all members of the household must consent to being involved in the process. In **2024**, the **Juvenile Treatment Court** served **13** youth with a total of **35** family members involved in the program. **0** of the youth received new charges while participating in FIC. The **Dependency Treatment Court** served **16** families with a total of **27** children. **22** of the children were reunified with a parent.

DIVERSION: Referrals to the Diversion Program for Williams County youth come from a number of entities including the Prosecuting Attorney's Office, law enforcement, school administration/staff, and Williams County Job and Family Services. Diversion uses programming, supervision, and support as ways to redirect youth. The program reduces recidivism rates, reduces Court costs, and provides necessary services and resources to youth and their families. The Court has three Diversion Programs. One program is Providing Accountability Through Honor and Education, or PATHE. The purpose of this program is to provide a one-time visit with the Diversion Officer that is educational and involves the entire family to assist in finding solutions to the presenting issues. Another program is simply Diversion. The purpose of this program is to provide more in depth and structured assistance. The Diversion Officer completes screens, refers the juvenile/family to treatment, and completes monthly visits. This program can last up to six (6) months. The Court also has Pre-Adjudication Diversion. This program is Court Ordered by the Judge. All filings associated with any case referred to Diversion will be sealed and expunged upon successful completion of the program. In **2024**, **71** juveniles were referred to the Diversion Program. **64** juveniles completed the program successfully, **5** had a neutral termination, **35** juveniles continued into **2025**, and **17** juveniles were referred back to the Prosecutor's Office for formal prosecution.

Ages	Male	Female	Total
6	2	1	3
7	0	1	1
8	4	0	4
9	1	2	3
10	3	1	4
11	3	2	5
12	2	5	7
13	7	6	13
14	7	6	13
15	2	6	8
16	3	1	4
17	5	1	6
18	0	0	0

Residency	Total
Alvordton	3
Bryan	24
Edgerton	1
Edon	1
Kunkle	2
Montpelier	26
Pioneer	6
Stryker	3
West Unity	5

CARTEENS: CARTEENS is a traffic safety program that educates teen drivers in an attempt to reduce the number of repeat juvenile traffic offenders, decrease the number of teen traffic offenders, and increase teen awareness of traffic/vehicle safety. The “Car” in CARTEENS stands for “Cautions and Responsibility”, and the “Teens” refers to the teenagers who help prepare and present the program. In the CARTEENS program, teen and adult leaders teach traffic education safety programs to first-time teen traffic offenders, while also building offenders’ self-esteem and interpersonal skills. Program topics include excessive speed, driving under the influence, seat belt safety use, consequences of unsafe decisions, dealing with peer pressure, understanding traffic laws, and recognizing and reacting to traffic signs and signals. This program is presented to Williams County youth through a collaborative effort of the Northwest Ohio OSU Extension 4-H Office, the Williams County Juvenile Court, and the Ohio State Highway Patrol. The Court allows many first time juvenile traffic offenders the opportunity to have their traffic violation dismissed by completing the CARTEENS program. Juvenile traffic offenders that are ordered into the program must successfully complete the program and pay all Court costs prior to their traffic violation being dismissed. In **2024**, **21** juveniles were referred to the CARTEENS program.

MENTORING PROGRAM: Mentors for Williams County is a nonprofit agency, providing mentors for the youth in Williams County. The goal of the mentoring program is to inspire our youth to make positive changes in their life and end the repeating pattern of harmful or otherwise negative behavior. The Court continues to refer our youth to this program when mentors are available for assignment.

FAMILY SERVICES: In **2024**, the Court referred to Shalom Counseling and Mediation Services, Recovery Services of Northwest Ohio, Center for Child and Family Advocacy and Maumee Valley Dispute Resolution, LLC to bring family services to those involved in the Court system. These services include psychosocial assessments, mental health and behavioral health assessments, diagnosis and recommended treatment plans that include but are not limited to, mental health treatment plans, parenting education, supervised visitation, parent coaching, Parent Project, Strengthening Families, conflict management skills training, anger management, alcohol and substance use awareness and treatment services, and skills training. The family services allow parties to be given tools and new skills that will enable them to improve communication, strengthen relationships, emotional modulation, parenting skills and strategies to solve problems, offer safety, provide structure, positive discipline, celebrate success and build trust within the family system. In **2024**, **43** families were referred to these services.

CLINICAL SERVICES: Services and agencies utilized by the Court include Maumee Valley Guidance Center, Recovery Services of Northwest Ohio, Williams County Health Department, Shalom Counseling and Mediation Services, Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program (CCMEP), OhioGuidestone, Harbor Behavioral Health, Court Diagnostic and Treatment Centers, Dr. Diane Peters, and The Forum Ohio.

STARS: In 2023, in collaboration with the Ohio 4-H Youth Development program through The Ohio State University Extension, the Court brought STARS (Students Taking Action and Responsibility for Success) to its youth. The goal of this program was to prepare our youth for success after high school by teaching life and work skills. In **2024**, a total of **20** youth were referred to the program with **9** youth successfully completing the program and **7** youth continuing into 2025.

CO-PARENTING IN TODAY'S WORLD: Ohio law requires the Court to provide a parenting education class for parents going through the Court process to establish paternity and to allocate parental rights. In 2022, the Court worked in collaboration with former Magistrate, Richard Altman to develop a program that would meet the law's requirements. The program has become a dynamic, interactive program for parents. In **2024**, **93** adults completed the program.

"WHAT ABOUT ME" PROGRAM: The Court continues to provide an educational and compassionate program for children between the ages of 5 and 17 to assist them in the transition when their parents separate or when they become the focus of a custody action. The Court's program uses trained volunteers to assist the children. The Court is one of two Court's in the state of Ohio that provide this program to children. In **2024**, **39** children completed the program.

CONFINEMENT, REHABILITATION, AND PLACEMENT FOR WILLIAMS COUNTY YOUTH IN 2023

NORTHWEST OHIO JUVENILE DETENTION, TRAINING, AND REHABILITATION CENTER: The Northwest Ohio Juvenile Detention, Training, and Rehabilitation Center (NWOJDC), which is located in Williams County, Ohio, became operational in February of 2000 as a regional Juvenile Detention and Rehabilitation Center. The Detention Center provides secure detention to juveniles within the jurisdictions primarily of Defiance, Henry, Fulton, and Williams Counties. The Center consists of approximately 17,000 square feet and has 32 individual detention cells, a control room, multi-purpose room, two classrooms, intake area, nurse, medical clinic, gymnasium, library, administrative offices, and a secure outdoor recreation area. The Northwest Ohio Juvenile Detention, Training, and Rehabilitation Center is governed by a Board of Trustees where each member has a vote. The Court Judges in the four counties are Ex Officio members of the Board. In **2024**, Williams County detained **72** youth for detention and/or rehabilitation at the Northwest Ohio Juvenile Detention, Training and Rehabilitation Center for a total of **1924** days.

JUVENILE RESIDENTIAL CENTER OF NORTHWEST OHIO: The Juvenile Residential Center of Northwest Ohio (JRC) operates a 42 bed facility located in Wood County, Bowling Green, Ohio that houses male delinquent offenders with an underlying felony charge. The mission of the Juvenile Residential Center of Northwest Ohio is to assist youth and their families in making positive changes that contribute to an improved functioning in the home environment while protecting the community. In collaboration with Courts, families, and other outside service providers, the facility seeks to individualize each youth's treatment and enhance their pro-social development. JRC is governed by the following counties: Defiance, Fulton, Hancock, Henry, Ottawa, Paulding, Putnam, Van Wert, Williams, and Wood. In **2024**, the Court placed **3** juveniles with delinquency adjudications of a felony charge into the Juvenile Residential Center of Northwest Ohio.

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH SERVICES: The Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS) is the juvenile correction system for the State of Ohio. DYS is statutorily mandated to confine felony offenders, ages 10-21, who have been adjudicated and committed by one of Ohio's 88 county Juvenile Courts. The mission of the Ohio Department of Youth Services is to improve Ohio's future by habilitating youth and empowering family and communities. DYS also provides parole services to youth upon release from a DYS facility to assist in the transition from the institution back into the community. In **2024**, the Court placed **2** juveniles into the Department of Youth Services and **1** youth carried over from **2023**.