



ANNUAL REPORT
THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

Vision

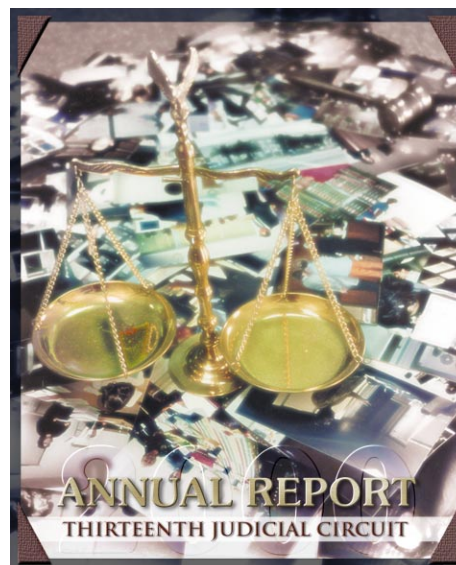
The Vision of the Administrative Office of the Courts, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit, is to provide the best service to the Judiciary and Public by:

- earnestly working together to achieve the highest goals,
- providing innovative responses to our community's needs,
- assisting the Judiciary in fulfilling its constitutional role,
- encouraging the exchange of information throughout Court Administration and with those we serve,
- honoring excellence in individuals and teams,
- continually seeking improvement, and
- drawing upon our diversity as a source of vitality.

OUR COVER THEME

The turn of the century brought some unique challenges for the Administrative Office of the Courts. Maintaining our focus, the judiciary and the staff were busy with a multitude of activities to build the public trust and confidence in the judicial system. The cover photo illustrates these activities, in a manner consistent of days gone by, but also includes the technology of today. In some ways, the responsibilities of the court remain steadfast with tradition; yet, as public demand increases, the role of the court expands.

Summer Intern, Eunice Kindred, a student at Harvard University, designed the cover photo.



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Court Facilities

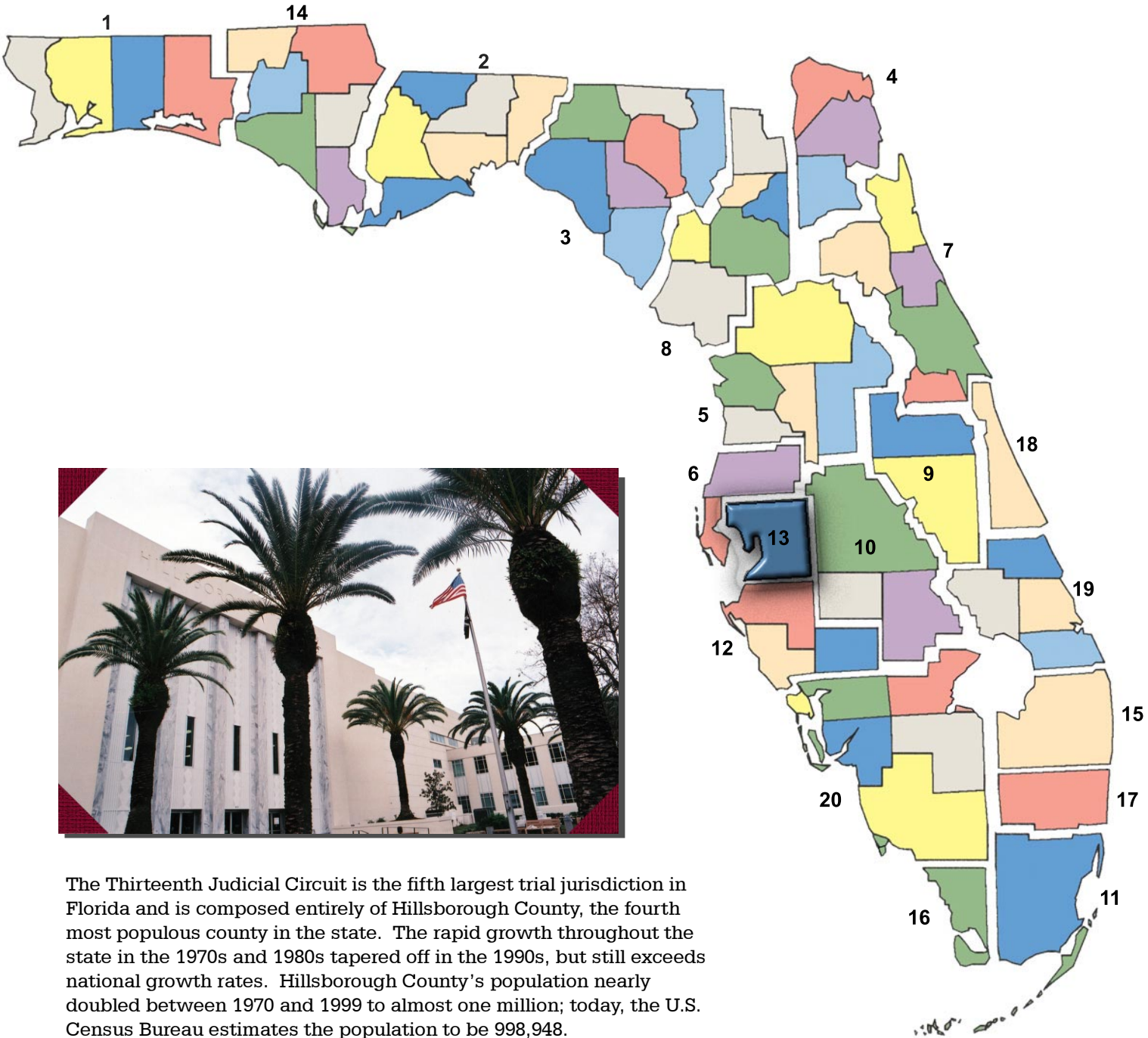
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The Thirteenth Judicial Circuit is the fifth largest trial jurisdiction in Florida and is composed entirely of Hillsborough County, the fourth most populous county in the state. The rapid growth throughout the state in the 1970s and 1980s tapered off in the 1990s, but still exceeds national growth rates. Hillsborough County's population nearly doubled between 1970 and 1999 to almost one million; today, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates the population to be 998,948.

Located midway along the west coast of Florida, Hillsborough County has 1,048 square miles of inland water; this county is the size of Rhode Island. Incorporated cities are Tampa, Temple Terrace and Plant City. Hillsborough County's share of metropolitan area population growth increased from about 1/3 in the 1970s to over 1/2 in the late 1990s. Tampa is the largest city of Florida's West Central Coast; it is the hub of finance, insurance, real estate, professional sports and cultural activities. As our population increases, so does the caseload in the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit. The courts strive to meet the growing demand for services in our community.

Turn of the Century Marks the Beginning of a New Millennium



There was a great deal of pomp and circumstance that surrounded the celebration of this new year. The clocks did not stop as many skeptics proposed; in fact, if anything, time seems to move more swiftly.

The revisions of Article V of the Florida Constitution have required our staff to work diligently on issues ranging from quality assurance measures to budget inventory and cost comparisons from state and county funding. We have also continued implementation of our courthouse facilities project, with renovations to our present buildings and coordination with architects for the new space.

We have witnessed many other changes within our judiciary this year, with illness of some and retirement of others. Senior judges were instrumental in the administration of justice during this transitional period. Judge James Moody was elevated to the federal bench, while Judge Ed Ward, Judge Ralph Steinberg and Judge Gasper Ficarrota retired from the bench. The absence created by the death of Judge Diana Allen was especially painful. She was a tremendous asset to this community.

On a brighter note, we welcomed the newest members of our judiciary, Judge Herbert Baumann to the circuit bench, as well as Judge Eric Myers and Judge Mark Wolfe to the county bench. Governor Bush also appointed Judge Marva Crenshaw to the circuit bench. Earlier this year, Judge Richard Nielsen, Judge William Levens, Judge Charlene Honeywell and Judge Wayne Timmerman were appointed to the circuit bench, while Judge Robert Foster was elected to the circuit bench.

As you review the highlights of this year, I hope you can see evidence of our commitment to increase access to the courts and build public trust and confidence in the judicial system. Justice will continue to prevail in the new century, but will require a great deal of labor as we expand our services to meet the public's demands. Under the leadership of your new chief judge, the Honorable Manuel Menendez, judges and staff continue to work toward increasing access to the courts for each one of Hillsborough County's citizens.

While I look forward to my future endeavors, I can tell you without hesitation that I will miss this place. You will be well served by Chief Judge Menendez, my former colleagues, and our staff. Like me, each one of them is appreciative for the opportunity to serve you and promises to continue to live up to the vision and values of this organization.

Hillsborough County has experienced exponential growth, and demands for court services are much different from what we would have anticipated even a decade ago. Yet we face some of the same important issues now that we have in the past. While we respond to an increased demand in the diversity of services, our focus is on access to justice. These are just a few of our accomplishments this year.

Drug Court Graduation Broadcast



Judge Evans, Judge Foster, Governor Bush, Jim McDonough, Judge Espinosa and Chief Judge Alvarez.

In recognition of some of the graduates of our drug court programs, distinguished guests, including Governor Jeb Bush, gathered to participate in a statewide, coordinated drug court graduation on May 18, 2000.

Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners recognized National Drug Court Month and Drug Court Recognition Day by proclamation. Tampa's Mayor Dick Greco also urged city residents to join him in recognizing the practitioners and participants who make drug courts work, as well as the contribution drug courts have made in reducing drug usage and crime.

Virtual Trial Courtroom

Unveiled on May 1, 2000, in Courtroom 1 in the Main Courthouse, the Virtual Trial Courtroom is expected to be most useful in complex litigation cases in which a substantial amount of evidence is presented. Representatives from the Courts Business Center and Xerox were on-site at the ceremony to provide demonstrations of the available technology.

Family Intake Video Produced

Intended to guide pro se litigants through some of the legal issues experienced during divorce, this video was produced by the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Hillsborough County Bar Association. WTVT FOX 13's Kelly Ring narrated the video.

A specialized section of the Criminal Justice Division was established to handle cases involving allegations of sexual battery; unlawful sexual activity with certain minors; lewd or lascivious offenses committed upon or in the presence of an elderly person or disabled adult; abuse, aggravated abuse and neglect of a child; contributing to the delinquency or dependency of a child; sexual performance by a child; protection of minors; and prohibition of certain acts in connection with obscenity or computer pornography.

Office of Public Information Established

While there have been individual and programmatic efforts to address public awareness, there was no centralized effort until the creation of this program. The office coordinates written publications, internet web-pages, Town Hall meetings, and produces multimedia presentations, including a monthly television magazine show which airs on local government access channels.

ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP

The Chief Judge and the Trial Court Administrator work together to ensure the efficient and effective operation of the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit.

Chief Judge of the Circuit Court

Chosen by circuit and county judges in the circuit, the Chief Judge has the responsibility of administrative supervisor over all courts, judges and officers of the court in the circuit. As administrator of the circuit, the Chief Judge is responsible for:

- **developing an administrative plan for the circuit to run efficiently and properly,**
- **assigning judges to courts and divisions and determining the length of each assignment,**
- **assigning judges to temporary duty within the circuit,**
- **appointing an “administrative judge” in any court division of the circuit,**
- **regulating the use of courtrooms, examining dockets in the circuit and requiring status reports of the actions on the dockets, and**
- **examining the status of every inmate in the county jails.**

Trial Court Administrator

Assisting the Chief Judge in carrying out administrative duties related to the operation of county and circuit courts within the circuit, the Trial Court Administrator performs a range of functions, from management of court programs to facilities management. Other duties include jury and witness management, public information, case flow management, information systems, court reporting, technology, certified process servers, dispute resolution alternatives, interagency coordination, analyses in criminal justice areas, judges' certifications, program performance audits, development of policies and procedures, new program and service proposals, contract negotiations and other administrative duties associated with day-to-day court operations.

For more information on court programs under supervision of the Trial Court Administrator, see pages 21-37.



Chief Judge Alvarez and Trial Court Administrator Mike Bridenback.

Chief Judge F. Dennis Alvarez is a lifetime resident of Tampa. He graduated from Jesuit High School and continued his education at the University of South Florida, where he received a B.A. in Business. He earned his Juris Doctorate from South Texas College of Law. His career began in private law practice, and he later prosecuted cases with the State Attorney's Office. He returned to a successful law practice until 1980 when he was elected to the position of county judge; four years later he was elected to the circuit court bench. Judge Alvarez served as Chief Judge from 1988 until his retirement in 2001. While much of Chief Judge Alvarez' time was devoted to administrative duties, he also presided as a judge in the Juvenile Drug Court division in 2000.

Mike Bridenback has served as Trial Court Administrator since 1994. Originally from Bonifay, Florida, his career has always been in the criminal justice field. After graduating from Florida State University with a B.A. in Criminology, he worked first with Governor Askew's office and subsequently with the Office of State Court Administrators. Mike also earned a Master's degree in Public Administration from Florida State University. During his seventeen-year tenure with the Office of State Court Administrator (OSCA), he devoted time to the development of mediation services throughout the state, which is now an integral part of the court system. After several promotions within OSCA, he served as Chief of Court Services until his appointment here as Court Administrator.

Clerk of the Court

Responsibilities related to the courts include ensuring that the court's orders, judgments or directives are carried out within the parameters allowed by law; maintaining the court's records; collecting and disbursing the court fines, fees and assessments; and collecting and disbursing court-ordered child support and alimony payments.

The court's section has several departments, including: Jury Services, Foreclosure Services, Circuit Civil/Family Law, Appeals, Traffic, Mental Health, County Civil, Probate, Guardianship & Trust, Juvenile, Misdemeanor County and Domestic Violence.



Richard Ake was appointed Hillsborough County Clerk of the Circuit Court in 1985 by then Governor Bob Graham. Originally from Moultrie, Georgia, he joined the clerk's office in 1961. Since serving as the head of this agency, he has drawn opposition only once.

Public Defender

Assuring that effective, quality legal representation is efficiently provided to all indigent persons, the court appoints the Office of the Public Defender. Beyond that, at Ms. Holt's direction, this office has taken additional efforts to identify the causes of criminal behavior in an attempt to reduce the rate of repeat offending and promote positive change in the lives of those "at risk" of entering the criminal justice system.

In fiscal year 1999-2000, the Office of the Public Defender was appointed to 67,230 cases. This office represents approximately 75% of the criminal cases filed in the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit.



Julianne M. Holt
A lifelong resident of Tampa, Julianne M. Holt was first elected Hillsborough County Public Defender in 1992. Ms. Holt attended South Texas College of Law, where she graduated Summa Cum Laude. She is also a graduate of Leto High School and the University of South Florida. Prior to her election to this office, Ms. Holt had her own law practice where she handled both criminal and civil cases.

Sheriff

The Sheriff enforces criminal laws, attends to the courts of the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit and is keeper of all the persons imprisoned in the county jails. The Court Services Section of Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) provides law enforcement and bailiff support for the circuit, responds to and provides security and welfare of more than 48,000 inmates appearing in court and is also responsible for meals, transportation and overnight accommodations for jurors.



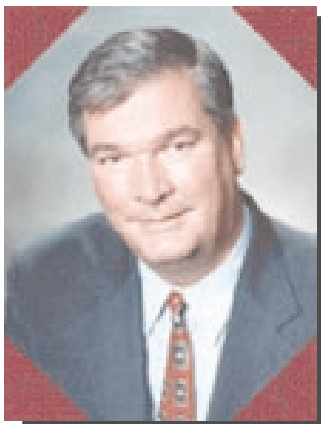
Sheriff Cal Henderson was elected to this office in 1992. He is a native of Tampa and graduated from the University of South Florida, where he earned both a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts degree with honors. He began his law enforcement career in 1965 with the Tampa Police Department. He was hired by HCSO as a patrol deputy in 1969 and rose through the ranks, serving as Colonel in charge of the four divisions of the Enforcement Operations Department until he took office as Sheriff. He ran unopposed in his second and third terms.

Bailiffs took more than 3,600 people into custody on court orders or arrest warrants at the courthouse in 2000.

Representing the people in both capital and noncapital prosecutions for violations of state laws and related matters in state courts is the responsibility of the State Attorney. He prosecutes criminal cases and serves as chief advisor to the grand jury; he represents the public interest in all criminal matters and cases that affect the community safety, peace and welfare; and he conducts and coordinates all criminal investigations with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies concerning violations of state law.



John F. Rudy was appointed by Governor Jeb Bush as Hillsborough County State Attorney in July, after the death of former State Attorney, Harry Lee Coe III. Rudy took a leave of absence from his private law practice to accept the responsibility of interim leadership until January, when the newly elected official began service. His diversified experience includes over thirty years as a prosecutor and private attorney both in the Tampa Bay community and in Washington, D.C. A native of Orlando, he was a founder of a local Tampa law firm. He received a Bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina and his law degree from American University.



Mark Ober was elected State Attorney in November 2000. He graduated from the University of South Florida and also earned a law degree from South Texas College of Law in Houston. A former prosecutor, Ober worked eleven years for the Hillsborough State Attorney's Office. He handled misdemeanor, juvenile and felony crimes before becoming Chief of the Career Criminal, Major Crimes, Special Prosecution and Homicide Division. Prior to his election, Ober was in private practice as a trial lawyer.

The majority of jury trials in Florida take place before one judge in circuit court. The circuit courts are sometimes referred to as courts of general jurisdiction, in recognition of the fact that most criminal and civil cases originate at this level. In contrast, the majority of non-jury trials in Florida take place before one judge in county court. A large part of this court's work involves citizen disputes, such as traffic offenses, misdemeanors and relatively small monetary disputes.

There are twenty judicial circuits in Florida, each with a varying number of judges, dependent upon population and caseload of the particular area. Judges are elected by the voters in nonpartisan, contested elections and serve for six-year terms. In the event a judge cannot serve the remainder of his or her term, the governor of Florida appoints a judge to that position on the bench. As part of his administrative duties, the chief judge assigns each judge to serve in a specific division; every attempt is made to honor the request of each judge.

CIRCUIT JUDGES



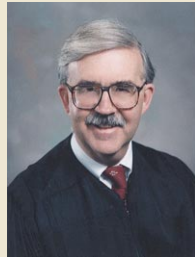
F. Dennis Alvarez



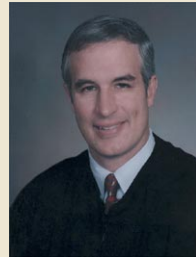
James D. Arnold



Rex M. Barbas



James M. Barton, II



Herbert J. Baumann, Jr.



Debra K. Behnke



Robert H. Bonanno



Marva L. Crenshaw



Jack Espinosa, Jr.



Katherine G. Essrig



Donald C. Evans



Gasper J. Ficarrotta



Ronald N. Ficarrotta



Barbara Fleischer



Florence Foster



William Fuente



Dick Greco, Jr.



Gregory P. Holder



Cynthia A. Holloway



Charlene E. Honeywell

CIRCUIT JUDGES



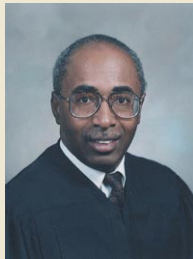
Chief Judge Alvarez passes the gavel to Chief Judge Menendez.



Claudia R. Isom



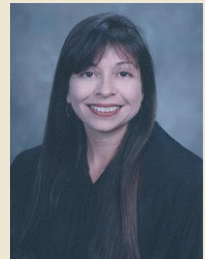
William P. Levens



Perry A. Little



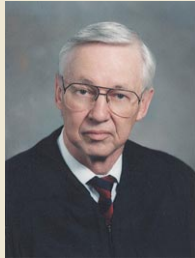
Richard A. Nielsen



Vivian C. Maye



Manuel Menendez, Jr.



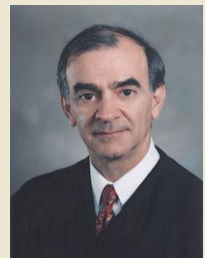
Bob Anderson Mitcham



James S. Moody, Jr.



J. Rogers Padgett



Sam D. Pendino



Daniel L. Perry



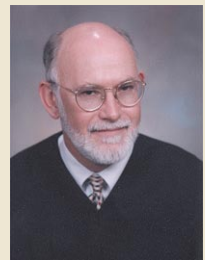
Susan Sexton



Robert J. Simms



Ralph Steinberg



Ralph C. Stoddard



Chet A. Tharpe



Wayne S. Timmerman

COUNTY JUDGES



Judges, Court Administrator and Chief Justice Charles T. Wells discuss Article V issues.



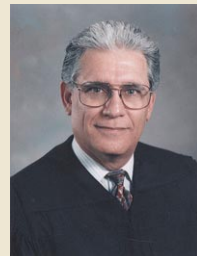
Charlotte Anderson



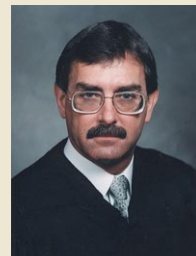
James V. Dominguez



Gaston J. Fernandez



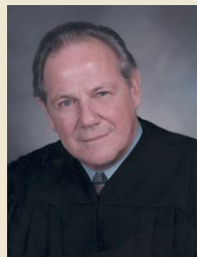
Frank A. Gomez



Walter R. Heinrich



Manuel A. Lopez



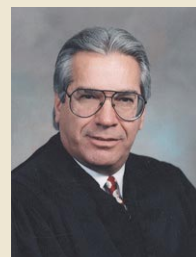
Elvin L. Martinez



Eric R. Myers



Joelle Ann Ober



Raul C. Palomino, Jr.



Denise Pomponio



Cheryl K. Thomas

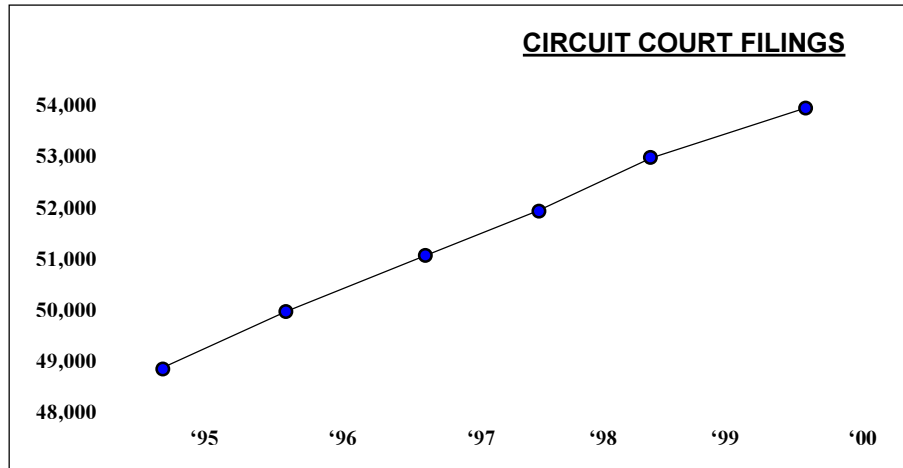


Christine K. Vogel



Mark R. Wolfe

CIRCUIT COURTS have general trial jurisdiction over matters not assigned by statute to the county courts and also hear appeals from county court cases. Thus, circuit courts are simultaneously the highest trial courts and the lower appellate courts in Florida's judicial system. There are twenty judicial circuits in the state. Comprised entirely of Hillsborough County, the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit is the fifth largest jurisdiction in Florida.



Circuit filings have increased almost 10% since 1995. The most dramatic rise in filings was in the Criminal Justice and Trial Division (18%) and the Civil Division (14%).*

*Data is received from the Florida Supreme Court Summary Reporting System (SRS) Report, which is used as a base for workload measures for judges. This data is based on information received from the Clerk of Court and is most accurate as of the run date of the report.

General Civil Division

Jurisdiction of this court division includes professional malpractice, products liability, real property/foreclosure, auto negligence, eminent domain, condominium, contract and civil indebtedness and other civil matters in excess of \$15,000. In addition, jurisdiction includes appeals from final administrative orders of local government code enforcement boards and the majority of appeals from county court.

There are ten judges assigned to this division.


Honorable Robert H. Bonnano is the Administrative Judge.

FAST FACTS FROM GENERAL CIVIL				
	FILINGS		DISPOSITIONS	
	Personal Injury	2,842	Jury Trial	111
	Contract	1,580	By Judge	5,300
	Property	3,852	Settlement	3,055
	Other	<u>1,552</u>	Other	<u>498</u>
TOTAL	9,826	TOTAL	8,964	

Mortgage foreclosures represented 39% of filings; auto negligence followed with 18% of filings.

Jurisdiction includes felonies and all misdemeanors arising out of the same circumstances as a felony. These offenses include capital murder, noncapital murder, sexual offenses, drugs, robbery, burglary, theft, forgery, fraud and worthless checks, and other crimes against persons or properties that are classified as felonies.

There are eight judges assigned to this division.
Honorable J. Rogers Padgett is the Administrative Judge.

 FAST FACTS FROM CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND TRIAL DIVISION			
<u>FILINGS</u>		<u>DISPOSITIONS</u>	
Violent Crimes	2,783	Pleas	11,120
Property Crimes	5,976	Trial	296
Drug Crimes	4,254	Other	<u>2,820</u>
Other Felonies	<u>1,489</u>	TOTAL	14,236
TOTAL	14,502		
<u>REOPENED</u>		6,046	

Pre-Trial Intervention

Designed to deal with first time felony drug offenders in 1992, this Pre-Trial Intervention Drug Court program is a 12-18 month drug rehabilitation program for defendants charged with third-degree felony offenses, such as grand theft, uttering a forged instrument, or possession of cocaine/drugs. Participants in this diversionary program must be willing to waive speedy trial. Upon successful completion of the program, the initial charges are dismissed, giving the defendant a chance to start over. Before a defendant may enter the program, he or she must be approved by the judge, the State Attorney's Office, the Department of Corrections Pre-Trial Intervention Program and Drug Abuse Comprehensive Coordinating Office (DACCO). The program exceeded capacity in 2000, with more than 279 participants.

Sixty-seven percent of participants graduate from this program, which exceeds the national average. Eighty-one percent of those graduates who have been out of the program for twelve months have not re-entered the criminal justice system.

Drug cases represented 29% of all cases within the Criminal Justice and Trial Division, the largest percentage of any categories listed in this division.

Based on the success of the diversion program and the fact that forced treatment has been proven to be as effective as voluntary treatment, the Drug Court Division was established in 1994 for more serious drug offenders who requested treatment and agreed to plead guilty to the charges against them.

Certified addictions specialists work for the Administrative Office of the Courts to provide the judge with recommendations for structured treatment plans.

There are three judges assigned to this division.
Honorable Donald C. Evans is the Administrative Judge.

Juvenile Drug Court Division

The first program of its kind in Florida, this division was initiated in 1996 as a diversionary program to address the problem of substance abuse among youth, in response to learning that 60% of the youth at the Juvenile Assessment Center had illegal substances in their systems at the time of booking.

More than 1,600 offenders are under the supervision of the two drug divisions, receiving intensive judicial and community supervision, in addition to drug treatment and regular drug testing.

More than 87% of the youth who successfully complete the program do not re-enter the criminal justice system; meaning less than 15% are arrested again. Of those juveniles who decline to participate in the program, more than half of them are arrested again.

Guardianship, Mental Health, Probate and Trust

Petitions alleging incapacity are filed in this division; judges must then make decisions regarding the need for and extent of guardianship. Guardians assist incapacitated people in meeting the essential requirements for their physical health and safety, in protecting their rights, in managing their financial resources and in developing or regaining their abilities to the extent possible. The probate process involves collecting a decedent's assets, liquidating liabilities, paying necessary taxes and distributing properties to heirs.

There is one judge and one Special Master assigned to this division.

Honorable Susan Sexton is the Administrative Judge.

<u>FAST FACTS ON GUARDIANSHIP, MENTAL HEALTH, PROBATE AND TRUST</u>			
<u>FILINGS</u>		<u>DISPOSITIONS</u>	
Probate	2,456	By Judge	3,153
Guardianship	461	Before trial	<u>2,231</u>
Trust	49	TOTAL	5,384
Other Mental Health	<u>2,102</u>		
TOTAL	5,068		
<u>REOPENED</u>			
	4,481		

94% of cases reopened were Guardianship cases because of statutory requirements for reviews.

Juvenile Dependency Division

Judges must make decisions regarding the custodial placement of children and determine issues related to the "best interests" of the child before the court. Jurisdiction includes matters concerning children who have been allegedly abandoned, abused, neglected or surrendered for adoption. The Office of the Attorney General represents the Department of Children & Families. Parents are also entitled to legal representation; they may secure a private attorney or the court may appoint legal counsel on their behalf. In addition, the Guardian ad Litem volunteers "speak up for children" involved in dependency proceedings.

There are two judges assigned to this division. A Senior Judge was also assigned to hear Judicial Reviews. **Honorable Debra K. Behnke is the Administrative Judge.**

<u>FAST FACTS FROM DEPENDENCY DIVISION</u>	
<u>FILINGS</u>	
Reopened	1,646
Dispositions	6,664
Other	687
Foster Care Reviews	9,704
Shelter Hearings	1,382
Termination of Parental Rights Filed	203

To truly improve the court process for children, the judicial branch must collaborate with child advocates from a variety of fields. Therefore, an interdisciplinary group meets in conjunction with the annual Dependency Summit to work on improving Florida's dependency court system. The local Dependency Court Improvement Team meets each month and was chaired by Judge Behnke in 2000.



Mark Ober, Judge Little, Chief Judge Alvarez, Judge Espinosa and Julianne Holt participate in Judicial Town Hall Meeting where FOX 13's Warren Elly served as moderator.

Delinquency matters include juveniles who have committed a felony or misdemeanor, been found in contempt of court or violation of a local ordinance other than a traffic offense. The State Attorney's Office files charges against the juvenile, alleging a criminal offense has occurred. Entitled to legal counsel, a private attorney or the Public Defender advises the juvenile throughout the legal proceedings. The Department of Juvenile Justice provides case management services.

There are two judges assigned to this division; in addition, a special "Rocket Docket" was used this year. **Honorable Perry A. Little is the Administrative Judge.**



FAST FACTS FROM DELINQUENCY DIVISION

<u>COMPLAINTS</u>	10,998
<u>PETITIONS</u>	5,218
<u>REOPENED</u>	1,655
<u>DISPOSITIONS</u>	
Dismissed prior to petition	5,876
Petitions disposed	7,061
Certified to criminal	45
Direct Files to felony	314
<u>OTHER</u>	
Detention Hearings	6,096

The "Rocket Docket" launched in July 1999 as an attempt to clear a staggering backlog of juvenile delinquency cases, which were heard by Chief Judge Alvarez. With an average of 139 cases each month, prosecutors, public defenders, law enforcement and Department of Juvenile Justice staff processed more than 1,800 cases in thirteen months.

Jurisdiction includes domestic relations, adoptions, domestic violence, dissolutions of marriage, child support, custody, alimony, visitation and related matters. One party must file a petition initially, which identifies them as the petitioner and the other party is the respondent. The parties may or may not be represented by legal counsel.

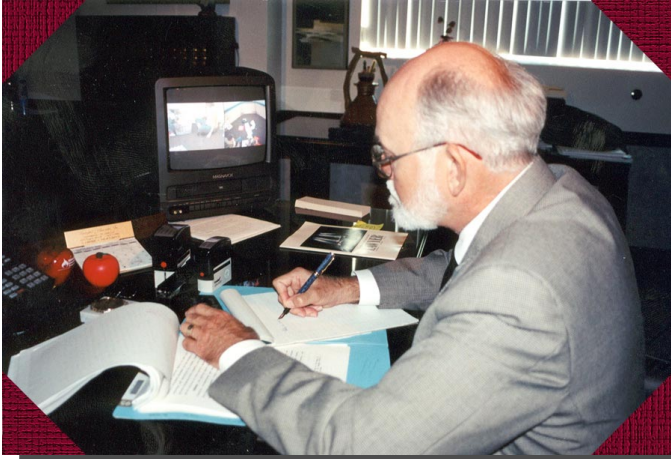
There are six judges, three general masters and two support hearing officers assigned to this division. Two judges were also assigned to hear Domestic Violence injunctions. **Honorable Ralph C. Stoddard is the Administrative Judge.**



FAST FACTS FROM FAMILY LAW DIVISION

<u>FILINGS</u>	
Dissolutions	6,013
Domestic Violence	5,623
Other	<u>6,017</u>
TOTAL	17,653
<u>REOPENED</u>	
Modified	3,461
Other	<u>4,366</u>
TOTAL	7,827
<u>DISPOSITIONS</u>	
By Judge	13,790
Before hearing	906
Other	<u>1,901</u>
TOTAL	16,597

Because of the various disciplines involved in family law proceedings, Judge Stoddard chairs the Family Implementation Team (FIT) to identify and resolve systems issues.



Judge Stoddard reviews supervised visitation tape.

Dissolutions of Marriage represented 34% of the filings in this division; Simplified Dissolutions represented less than 1% of those filings.

Domestic Violence Division
(*included in the Family Law Division)

Included within the Family Law Division, judges in this division preside over issues related to domestic violence and repeat violence. Any person who is the victim of domestic violence or has reasonable cause to believe he or she is in imminent danger of becoming a victim, may petition the court for an injunction for protection against domestic violence. The court can order the "respondent" to leave the home and/or require that individual to complete a batterers' intervention program.

Domestic Violence and Repeat Violence represented 31% of filings in the Family Law Division.

East County Division

To meet the needs of citizens within specific boundaries, the East Division of the Circuit Court was established in 1979. The courthouse is situated in the northeastern corner of Hillsborough County, in Plant City.

One full-time circuit judge is assigned in Plant City to handle a varied docket, including general civil, family law and probate cases. There are no felony or juvenile cases handled in the East County Division. One full-time and one part-time county court judge is also assigned to handle a varied docket, including county civil and criminal cases, consisting of both misdemeanor and traffic offenses.

Honorable Bob Anderson Mitcham is the Administrative Judge for the circuit division, while the **Honorable Christine K. Vogel is the Administrative Judge** for the county division.

East County Division

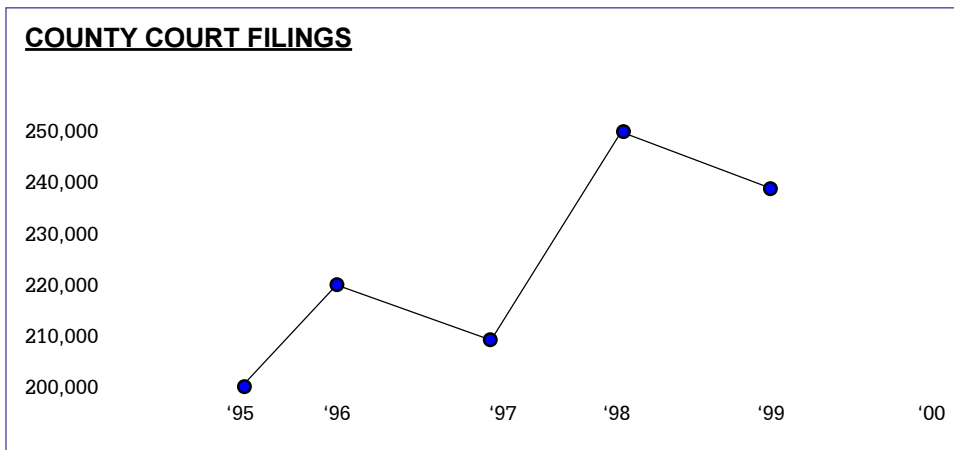
Cases are generally assigned to this division, if associated with the portion of Hillsborough County that is:

- located east of Highway 301, or
- the cause of action occurred in this area, or
- the property is located in the area.



Courthouse in Plant City

COUNTY COURTS sometimes referred to as the “people’s courts,” are often involved in citizen disputes, less serious criminal matters (misdemeanors), and small monetary disputes less than \$15,000. County judges are sometimes appointed as circuit judges to address areas in the circuit court as special needs and caseload dictates.



County court filings increased almost 23% from 1995 - 1999. While there was an almost 22% increase in civil infractions during this time period, other criminal traffic filings decreased. The most significant rise in filings was in the County Criminal division (27%). Information from the Clerk of the Court was unavailable for 2000 at the time of this report.

Florida statutes mandate that inmates have the right to appear before a judge within twenty-four hours of their arrest. A fiber optic link connects the jails and the courthouse via closed circuit television. These hearings are conducted through the use of the Court Video Network enabling inmates to appear in court without having to leave the secure confines of the jail, avoiding transportation costs and reducing the security risks.



Judge Heinrich speaks to defendants at the jail.

First Appearance or Emergency Criminal Court Division conducts live two-way video preliminary presentations on all criminal cases, bond and ROR motions, arraignment hearings for incarcerated defendants, misdemeanor violation of probation hearings for incarcerated defendants and other emergency criminal matters.

HCSO Orient Road Jail is the designated facility to book and process inmates. HCSO estimates 57,000 individuals were processed last year; approximately 50% of all detainees are released on bond/ROR within 24 hours of their arrest.

Jurisdiction includes civil actions, matters in equity, and landlord-tenant disputes in which the matter in controversy does not exceed \$15,000. The parties may elect to have a trial by the judge or have a jury trial; juries include six jurors and two alternates.

Four judges are assigned to this division.

FAST FACTS FROM COUNTY CIVIL DIVISION (excludes civil infractions, such as traffic violations)			
	FILINGS		DISPOSITIONS
	Small Claims	9,660	Jury Trial
	Evictions	8,919	By Judge
	Other	5,065	Settlement
	TOTAL	23,644	Other
			6,533
			20,497
	REOPENED	6,301	

Jurisdiction includes misdemeanor cases, criminal traffic offenses and county ordinance/municipal violations. The parties may elect to have a trial by the judge or the jury; the jury consists of six jurors and two alternates.

Six judges are assigned to this division.
Honorable James V. Dominguez is the Administrative Judge.

Jurisdiction includes all misdemeanor domestic violence charges filed and any new charges or probationary charges of a participating defendant. The State Attorney's Office represents the state; the defendant is entitled to legal representation; if he or she cannot afford an attorney, the Public Defender is appointed as legal counsel.

One judge is assigned to hear these cases; the judge is included in the County Criminal Division.

Since 1990, Civil Traffic Hearing Officers hear cases related to parking tickets and civil traffic infraction arraignments that do not involve personal injury. Since 1993, Special Masters for Animal Control hear cases related to Hillsborough County Ordinances Numbers 83-5 and 92-6.

General Masters and Support Hearing Officers

General Masters and Support Hearing Officers are quasi-judicial officers who conduct formal court hearings, take testimony and evaluate evidence. At the end of each hearing, he or she prepares a written report which contains recommendations as to what action the judge should take in the case. Either party may file written exceptions to reports within ten days. If no exceptions are filed, the court typically enters an order approving the recommendations.

The chief judge appoints a special master, pursuant to an administrative order, to hear and consider Baker Act and Marchman Act proceedings. These proceedings are related to involuntary placement for treatment based on a severe mental, emotional or behavioral disorder or substance abuse. The chief judge also appoints general masters, pursuant to Florida Family Rules of Procedures to hear and make recommendations on post-judgment family law matters and specific prejudgment temporary relief family law matters. This program was established in 1993 by an administrative order.

The general masters and hearing officers serve under the direction of the administrative judge of the Family Law Division. The special master serves under the direction of the administrative judge of the Guardianship, Mental Health, Probate and Trust Division.

In addition, the chief judge also appoints hearing officers for proceedings related under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act involving the establishment, modification and enforcement of support, foreign orders and determinations of arrears including those of assistance debt owed to the state.

GENERAL MASTERS



Roxie Crowell

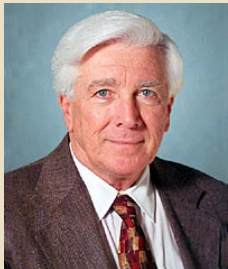


Marshall Farkas



Wes Pardue

SPECIAL MASTER



Nick Ficarrota

CHILD SUPPORT HEARING OFFICERS



Michael Coffee



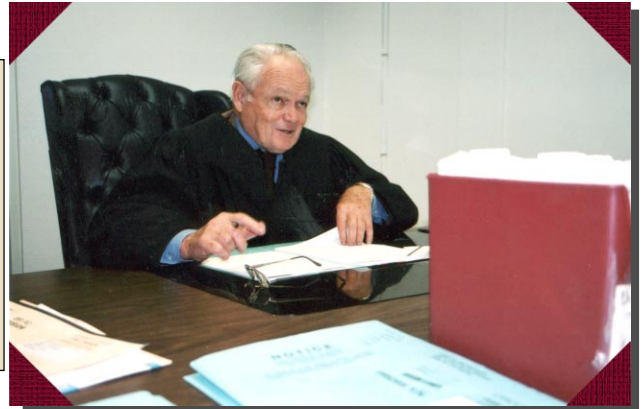
Joe Navarra

Senior Judges

Retired judges who wish to remain active and offer assistance to this circuit are approved for recall by order of the Florida Supreme Court. These senior judges are vested with all necessary powers to complete judicial assignments. They are used for lengthy trials or special category cases; educational, professional or personal absence of a presiding judge; vacancies; and cases requiring out-of-circuit judges.

Senior Judges

Horace A. Andrews	Roland Gonzalez
Edward R. Bentley	John P. Griffin
Richard W. Carr	Edward A. Hinson
Frederick A. DeFuria	Robert F. Michaels
Carl C. Durrance	Thomas A. Miller, Sr.
Burton C. Easton	William A. Norris
Daniel L. Gallagher	Robert W. Rawlings, Jr.
Vincent E. Giglio	Harry Stein
John M. Gilbert	



Judge Gallagher presiding over cases in Plant City.

County Judges on Special Assignment

County judges are sometimes appointed as circuit judges to address the circuit court as special need and caseload dictates at:

- **first appearance division and civil domestic violence,**
- **overflow trial dockets in circuit court, or**
- **absence of the presiding judge.**

This year, Judge Eric Myers was temporarily assigned to the Family Law Division, while Judge Raul Palomino was also assigned to that division to hear domestic violence cases.

Civil Traffic Hearing Officers and Special Masters for Animal Control

Independent contractors are appointed by the chief judge to hear all civil traffic infractions except those filed in conjunction with criminal traffic offenses or cases involving personal injury or death or cases transferred to a county judge pursuant to Florida Statutes. In addition, these hearing officers also hear cases related to county ordinances for water violations or animal control.

CTHO

Daniel L. Castillo
Bruce Curry
David Dee
Maurice Feller
William Foster
Donald Gillette
Damon Glisson
Vicki Kaufholz
Lawrence Lempert
Nancy Lorenzo
Vicki Reeves
Kim Seavy
Bradley Souders
J. Benton Stewart*
 *Alternate



CTHO Officers receive training required by statutes.

Judicial Assistants

Each judge in the circuit and county courts has a judicial assistant to manage office operations and coordinate case activity. Commonly referred to as a J.A., these employees work under the direction of the individual judge. Administrative duties include scheduling court proceedings, preparing court orders, coordination of support personnel, providing information to the public and court system employees and maintaining the judge's private library.



Judicial Assistant Sharron Cosby talks with Marty Merrell during roleplay in an In-Service Training.

Bailiffs

Law enforcement officers, under the direction of the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, the bailiffs ensure that the safety and the dignity of the court are never compromised. Specifically empowered to maintain the security of the jury, the bailiff's duties also include protection of courtroom personnel and the public, assistance to witnesses and custody and transportation of all prisoners.



Bailiff David Bowers talks about "order in the court."

County Security

Hillsborough County Security Service provides support at the courthouse 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week. Personnel provide protection for visitors, employees and property, they respond to requests for assistance, handle lost-and-found items, and enforce parking regulations on county property.



Hillsborough County Security at the Plant City courthouse.



Legal staff

Under the leadership of court counsel, the Legal Department fulfills many roles within the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit. The court counsel and legal staff have the following responsibilities:

- represent the judiciary in all legal matters, including ethics, trial procedure, and case management,
- provide legal advice to the Chief Judge, Court Administrator and court managers,
- legal research projects, including post-conviction relief motions,
- prepare or assist with orders on pending cases and administrative orders,
- assist with case management.



Court Counsel David Rowland volunteers on the set of the Justice Files.

Administrative Orders in 2000

Full text and a complete list of administrative orders issued in 2000 and other existing orders can be found at our website: fjud13.org

- S-2000-108 "Jimmy Ryce Act" Case Assignment and Reporting
- S-2000-114 Trial Division in the General Civil Division
- A-2000-049 Assignment of Judges to all Circuit and County Divisions
- S-2000-064 Court Reporter Services and Fees
- S-2000-071 Provision of Interpreters by the Court Interpreter Center
- S-2000-083 Professional Fees for Criminal Cases
- S-2000-113 Suspension of Standard Bond Amount When Arrestee is on Felony Probation
- S-2000-002 Mandatory Parenting Courses in Family Law Cases
- S-2000-073 General Procedures for Family Law Cases Court Ordered to Mediation and Post Judgment Family Matters
- S-2000-107 Assignment and Transfer of Child Support Cases
- S-2000-115 General Masters and Hearing Officers
- S-2000-102 Circuit Criminal Division "H" (Sex and Child Abuse Offenses)
- S-2000-117 Drug Division
- S-2000-118 Uniform Administration Procedures for Circuit Court Criminal Justice and Trial Divisions
- S-2000-042 Amount of fees to Court Appointed Attorneys in Involuntary Placement Hearings



Senior staff members meet monthly to address management issues.

To assist the Trial Court Administrator in fulfilling his responsibilities, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) employs staff to serve in various departments, including: Central Office, Fiscal Affairs, Court Communications & Technology Services, Court Facilities, Court Operations, Court Personnel Resources and Mediation & Diversion Services. Each one of these departments is dedicated to assisting the Chief Judge and other members of the judiciary in carrying out constitutional and administrative duties.

Central Office

The Court Administrator and the Chief Deputy Court Administrator are located in the Central Office. With the assistance of other staff members, this office provides a variety of services that impact all departments and the overall court system. These services include policy development, court facilities planning, interagency coordination, court security and emergency planning, analyses of criminal justice areas and grant funding applications. Other services include contract negotiators, certification of Process Servers and management of the Courthouse Information areas.



Nancy Yanez, Chief Deputy Court Administrator, reviews plans with Hillsborough County architect Bill Hand.

This year increased quality assurance measures have been instituted for programs in preparation of Article V funding. A Performance Measures Team was created to provide leadership in developing mission statements in various areas and promoting progress toward outcome measures.

In addition, staff coordinated with internal departments, Hillsborough County departments and the architects and consultants regarding the construction and renovation of the Courthouse complex. Staff also met with members of the Hillsborough County Legislation delegation to discuss issues related to Article V funding.

Office of Public Information

Recognizing that communication is the key to increasing education about the court system and expanding access to the courts, greater emphasis has been placed on interacting with the public.

Traditional written publications, newsletters (*Courts Connection and Legal Pad*) and *Annual Report* will continue to be distributed and will also be available via the intranet and Internet. Focus was also broadened to multimedia presentations, allowing us to deliver our message in different formats.

Working in conjunction with the Courts Business Center, staff wrote and produced a video, *Administrative Office of the Courts at Work*. The presentation was used during conversations with members of the Hillsborough County Legislative Delegation and later played on Government Access Television for the general public to view.



Video expands multimedia presentation.

Development of a monthly news magazine show, *Justice Files*, was a major task in 2000. The premiere edition of the show aired on both Hillsborough County Television and City of Tampa Television in March 2001. The Judicial Town Hall Meeting on Juvenile Delinquency was also produced for government access television.

In-service topics included Personal Safety and Security in the Courthouse, An Overview of the Department of Corrections, Violence in the Workplace, Verbal De-escalation: Working with Agitated and Potentially Aggressive People, The Role of the Judicial Assistant in the Family Law Division, and a mandatory training session, Sexual Harassment in the Workplace.

Court Operations

The Senior Management Team oversees the operation of specialized court divisions, certain quasi-judicial resources and programs that have been established to meet the needs of the judiciary and the public of the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit. Leaders in developing innovative responses to improve aspects of the court system, the Senior Management Team works in close concert with one another.

In 2000, the team established the newest court division: Sex Crimes and Child Abuse.

As child welfare moves toward privatization, they were also involved in the development of Hillsborough Partners. In addition to providing consultation and guidance to Program Coordinators, this group represents the AOC at community meetings, including:

- **Public Safety Coordinating Council,**
- **Florida's Family Court Administrators, and**
- **Dependency Court Improvement projects.**



Senior Court Operations Consultants Jeff Rainey and Marty Merrell review architectural plans with staff.

This team is responsible for managing contracts for privatized services, including court reporting and misdemeanor probation. In addition, they are responsible for the administration of the Civil Traffic Hearing Officer Program.

Domestic Violence

This program operates under the direction of the Senior Management Team; direct services are provided contractually through eight providers. Monitoring is provided through a contract with the Department of Public Health at the University of South Florida to ensure that treatment criteria is consistent and state guidelines are met. In addition, staff serve on the community Domestic Violence Task Force, which was formed to provide an effective coordinated community response to domestic violence.

All alleged batterers entering the program are screened by a local provider, The Spring, Inc. Based on the screening assessment, they are classified by level and enter a treatment program. While Hillsborough County provides funding for operating expenses, participants in the program are required to pay treatment providers based on a sliding fee scale.



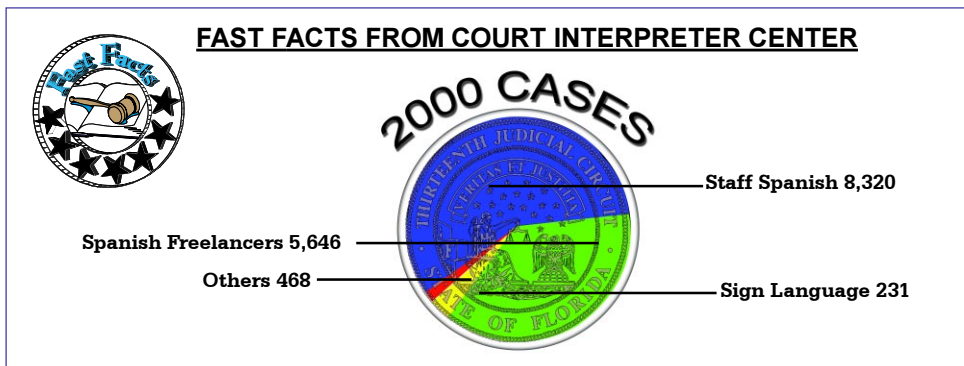
Judge Palomino and Judge Pomponio meet with Domestic Violence providers.

More than one-third of participants complete a treatment program. Demographics reveal 81% of offenders are male, while 19% are female.

Court Interpreter Center

One of the increasing challenges in court administration is the ability to ensure access to justice in a linguistically diverse court environment. Competent foreign language professional interpreters assist the judiciary by expediting brief court proceedings, including arraignments, bail-bond hearings and other pre- and post-trial activities.

One in seven defendants in this circuit is Spanish speaking. Staff interpreters covered 8,320 cases in 2000.



Staff and freelance interpreters provide services in 42 foreign languages and dialects. The most commonly-used languages in this circuit include Spanish, American Sign Language, Haitian Creole, Vietnamese and Korean. The program is a member of the Court Interpreter Advisory Workgroup (CIAW), which was created by the Office of State Courts Administrator for the purpose of establishing a formal Court Interpreter Certification Program for the State of Florida.

In March 2000, staff hosted a two-day Orientation Program for interpreters in Tampa; these training events are held several times a year in various sites around the state. Staff from this program were also featured in a Tampa Tribune article in September 2000.

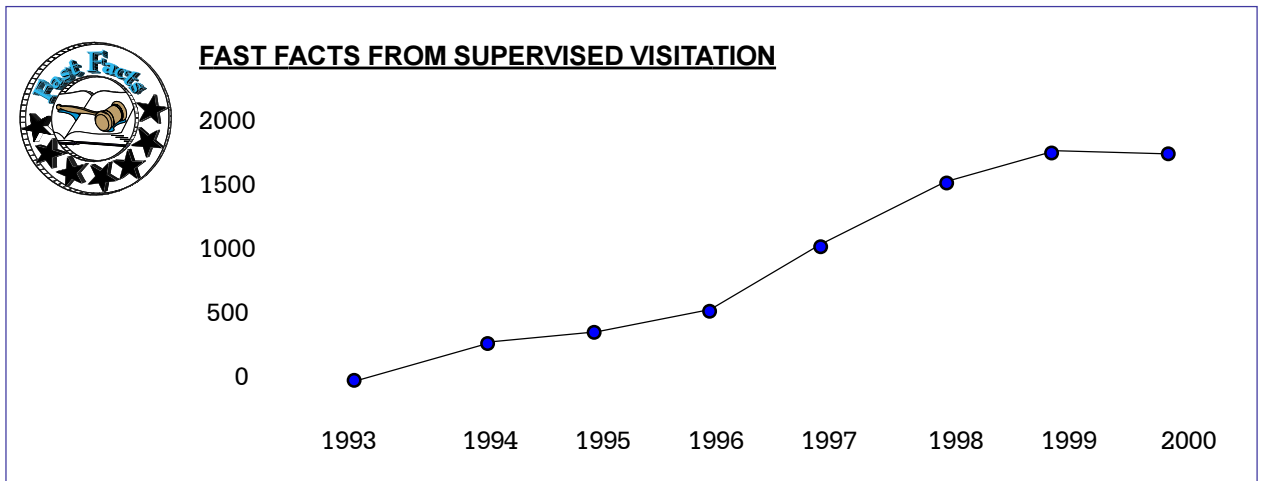


Established in 1993 through a collaborative effort between local law enforcement agencies, the Department of Children & Families, the Child Protection Team, mental health providers, Public Defender's Office and State Attorney's Office, this program was created to protect children from being re-traumatized by the system. While the impetus was to provide forensic interviews in child abuse investigations, the program has expanded to meet the needs of the community and our judiciary.

In 2000, the Children's Justice Center became the hub for court programs related to children. To provide increased access to services, the CJC operates more than 60 hours per week.

Supervised Visitation Program provides judges in Family Law and Dependency divisions an avenue of assessing the best interest of the child before the court when there is conflicting information by the parties. This service provides a place of safety for the child without jeopardizing the rights of parents and children to have contact with one another. With grant funding from Victims of Crime Act, the CJC has enhanced services in domestic violence cases. Beginning in October 2000, staff provided case management services to 54 clients.

This program was a charter member of the Florida Network of Supervised Visitation Centers, which was established in 1997; Trish Waterman, CJC Program Coordinator, presently serves as the Vice President of this organization.



Community Outreach provides professionals from local justice system organizations an opportunity to receive training through funding from the National Children's Alliance. Staff from the CJC also participated in local training at the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, Tampa Police Department, Plant City Police Department, Temple Terrace Police Department, Hillsborough County School Resource Officers, and Hillsborough County Security on issues related to talking with children about child abuse allegations. In April, staff from the program distributed blue ribbons in the lobby of the Main Courthouse; the Blue Ribbon Campaign symbolizes the need to prevent child abuse and neglect.

Because of the dramatic increase in services, renovations in the Main Courthouse were completed in 2000. Working with the CAC Foundation, a nonprofit organization, plans also include renovation at the 700 Twiggs Street building.

Children's Advocacy Center provides multi-disciplinary collaboration for forensic interviews and co-locates case management services which are provided by the Child Protection Team. The program has been a charter member of the National Children's Alliance since 1994. It was also a founding member of the Florida Network of Children's Advocacy Centers, which was established in 1997. Staff has served on the Board of Directors; presently, Jeff Rainey, Senior Court Operations Consultant, serves as the president of this organization.

97% of agency representatives completing satisfaction surveys believed the number of interviews was reduced as a result of CAC services in 2000.

Child Custody Investigations provides Family Law judges with social investigations related to child custody matters. These reports are designed to increase understanding of the family dynamics and to help determine the ultimate custody and visitation issues for the child and the parents.

Drug Court Programs

Drug Courts offer a compelling choice for individuals whose criminal justice involvement stems from alcohol or drug use: participation in treatment. These programs increase the public safety of Hillsborough County residents by reducing crime and costs of criminal activity by diverting substance abuse offenders into community-based treatment programs under extended, intense community and judicial supervision.

Certified addiction specialists work for the AOC to provide the judge with recommendations for structured treatment plans. Court staff are in constant communication with treatment providers to keep the judges advised of available treatment slots. Staff works with multi-disciplinary agencies to provide coordinated management, monitoring and evaluation of the system.



Mike Bridenback, Governor Bush and Chief Judge Alvarez with Drug Court Staff.

Excerpt from testimony by Charles at Drug Court graduation ceremony.
"Someone told me don't give up. I didn't give up. I kept on fighting. I kept on pushing. Every time I kept falling on my face. My judge didn't give up on me because I didn't give up on myself and now I'm here today to thank you, Judge Evans . . . I like him today, he saved my life, he really has . . . (Life) is beautiful. I want to live like normal people live. Today I got a steady job; today I got a checking account, today I got a savings account. Today on my job I handle cash money. Today, I am somebody."

A drug court establishes an environment that the participants can understand a system in which clear choices are presented and individuals are encouraged to take control of their own recovery.

More than 2,600 offenders receive intensive judicial and community supervision, in addition to drug treatment and regular testing.

Drug Court Divisions were created for the more serious drug offenders who requested treatment and agreed to plea to the charges against them. It is the largest drug court in Florida and was the second post sentence drug court established in the nation. The first division was established in 1994; it was expanded to a second division in 1998.

In March 2001, these divisions had 2,291 cases involving 2,325 defendants.

Pre-trial Intervention, established in 1992, is designed to deal with first time defendants. Before participants can enter this 12-18 month diversionary program, they must be willing to waive their right to a speedy trial and be approved by a multi-disciplinary panel, which includes the State Attorney's Office, Department of Corrections and the treatment agency. The Department of Corrections dedicates five officers to this program.

The majority of defendants who enter the program successfully complete this diversionary program. The leading reasons for termination include recommendation of the treatment provider or by request of the offender.

67% of participants in PTI graduate, which exceeds the national average. Recidivism rates indicate that 81% of graduates are not rearrested.

Juvenile Drug Court was initiated in 1996 as the first diversionary program in Florida to address the problem of substance abuse among youth. To be eligible for this diversionary program, the youth must have no history of prior felony arrests, must waive the right to a speedy trial and have an adult support unit. The teen must be willing to commit to a 12-month contract, which includes a minimum 10-month treatment program.

Successful completion of the program includes clean urine screens for six months, completion of court sanctions, enrolled in school or employed if education is completed and no other pending charges.

Statistical reviews indicate that more than 85% of graduates from Juvenile Drug Court do not re-enter the criminal justice system.

Elder Justice Center

Given the rapid growth of the aging population and the needs for improving access to the courts for our senior citizens, AOC established the first Elder Justice Center, EJC, in the nation in 1999. The mission of this program is to remove barriers and enhance linkages between older adults, the court system and medical, social and legal services. The goals include:

- **providing a designated facility,**
- **coordinating access to existing agencies,**
- **providing public education, and**
- **providing short term case management service.**

Through grant funding from the Retirement Research Foundation, EJC is working with the University of South Florida on a three-year research project related to the elderly involved in court proceedings.

Staff has made more than 100 presentations at senior expo's and other community forums about the services at the EJC, guardianship prevention and the prevention of re-victimization of crime. Judge Susan Sexton, April Hill, former EJC Program Coordinator, and Angie Smith, Senior Court Operations Consultant, presented "Establishing an Elder Justice Center," at the Florida Conference of Circuit Judges. A similar training event was presented by Joan Montagno, EJC Program Coordinator, and Angie Smith at the National TRIAD Conference in Williamsburg, Virginia.



Staff reviewed 1,393 cases from the Guardianship Division in 2000 and provided recommendations to the judge for court action when deemed appropriate.

Staff talked with more than 3,500 seniors, care givers, social workers and members of the community since its inception in October 1999.

Family Intake Unit

In Florida, 80% of all family law cases have at least one party who does not have an attorney. This self-help program was created in 1995 to provide support to the judiciary and Pro Se litigants involved in family law issues; in 1998 the unit was expanded to include assistance with dependency issues. Thirty-six packets with step-by-step instructions are available to assist the parties in navigating procedurally through the court system. Staff members screen cases and review files for correct pleadings and related legal documents in accordance with the law to allow judges to hear their case in a more timely and effective manner.

When asked if they would use the Family Intake Unit to help them if they had to do their case over, 83% of survey respondents said they would choose this program rather than an attorney.

A letter from a citizen

"You have been a blessing...in this entire situation of filing for divorce...I would have been extremely frustrated and confused without your guidelines...I am very thankful that there are people like you in our court system to keep the 'human and concerned' attitude alive."



FAST FACTS ABOUT FAMILY INTAKE UNIT

	1997	1998	1999	2000
				Walk-in Issues
Custody	413	579	1,042	1,560
Dissolution	1,952	2,789	3,982	4,664
Name Change	169	186	277	294
Paternity			206	419
Support	638	981	2,143	2,915
Visitation	199	274	413	603
Misc.	4,406	3,326	2,345	3,313
TOTAL	7,777	8,135	10,408	13,768

The number of Pro Se litigants seeking help, including walk-ins and telephone assistance increased almost 15% from last year, to 27,445. Staff also assisted Pro Se litigants by setting 2,660 cases for hearings in the Family Law Division.



Representing the best interest of Hillsborough County's abused, abandoned and neglected children throughout their involvement with the legal system, volunteers are recruited, trained and supervised by this program.

Volunteer responsibilities include:

- **investigating backgrounds of the child and family,**
- **working with agencies that provide services,**
- **protecting the child from insensitive questioning,**
- **acting as the child's spokesperson,**
- **presenting written court reports.**



FAST FACTS ABOUT GUARDIAN AD LITEM

195 active volunteers carried a caseload of 327 cases in 2000.

77 new volunteers were certified in 2000.

The program held the Second Annual Recognition Banquet to honor volunteers and program supporters. Lynn Adams, volunteer since 1996, was recognized as the GAL of the Year; Freda Williams received the Judge's Award. The Hillsborough County Bar Association and the Guardian ad Litem Guild held their annual Barrister Charity Ball in March 2000 at the Tampa Marriott Waterside Hotel. This black tie event benefits the GAL program. As tradition dictates, the program held its annual Holiday Toy Drive in December at Sacred Heart Academy. Thousands of toys were donated by employees of USAA, GTE, the Temple Terrace Police Department and Paula Jackson Triumph Moto-Guzzi.

Staff of the Indigent Screening Unit provides judges with financial information to assist in the determination of eligibility for services for the Public Defender or county funding for domestic violence treatment and monitoring. ISU staff visits three jail locations to interview staff and complete affidavits of indigency and application for appointment of the Public Defender. In addition, they interview defendants via video teleconference and telephone to determine eligibility for county funding to take anger management classes determined by Hillsborough County guidelines.

In 2000, ISU interviewed 23,768 defendants.

Staff of the Witness Aid Center provides information on the status of trials and court appearances regarding any changes affecting their appearance in circuit, county, juvenile and traffic courts. The amount of time spent waiting in court is reduced by the WAC, which reduces the payments by Hillsborough County for witness appearances. In addition, they assist civilians and law enforcement with mileage reimbursement and witness fees after appearance.

Witness Aid Center contacted citizens and law enforcement 385,364 times in 2000.

In addition to these services, these staff members assist citizens by providing information and directions at the Information Booth in the Courthouse Annex. Estimates indicate more than 65,000 people are assisted from this location each year.



Teen Court students assist in Virtual Trial Courtroom opening ceremony.

With several alternatives to the formal court process for first-time juvenile misdemeanor offenders, referrals for these programs are received from the judge or the State Attorney's Office. Specific sanctions address the needs of individual defendants and families. Major advantages of this example of restorative justice is that restitution for the victims is always collected in full, defendants are required to make an apology, as well as serve meaningful community service work.

In recognition of outstanding student volunteers, this program hosted their annual awards ceremony in May 2000. Three students received awards:

- **Mike Everitt, Bloomington High School**
- **Bo Banwo, Blake High School**
- **Fred Coleman, Brandon High School**

Theda James, Assistant Public Defender, and Pam Leonard, Court Counselor, were both recognized for their outstanding contributions to the program since its inception.

The gateway offense for teens is shoplifting. Petit theft was the most commonly alleged crime, representing 60% of referrals.

Juvenile Arbitration includes staff and certified arbitrators who hear cases of first-time offenders and determine appropriate sanctions, which typically include victim restitution, community service and educational assignments. Each case is reviewed every five weeks to assess compliance with the specific sanctions.

Arbitration received 3,000 referrals in 2000, representing 28% of complaints filed in the Delinquency Division.

Sanctions each month averaged 965 community service work hours.

Teen Court provides alternative sanctions to offenders by using volunteer attorneys to serve as judges and student volunteers to serve as attorneys, bailiffs, clerks and jurors. Referrals received are from school-related offenses. The State Attorney's Office and the Public Defender's Office assisted with twelve training sessions for the student volunteers. To ensure that juries were a realistic peer group, a "JV" court was established to encourage middle school students to take an active role in this diversionary program.

With a marked departure from traditional presentation of demonstrative evidence, Teen Court volunteers demonstrated the new technology now available for use at the unveiling of the Virtual Trial Courtroom in May 2000. These teenagers participated in a mock trial which focused on civil litigation of medical malpractice.

516 students, representing 40 Hillsborough County public and private schools, volunteered 3,250 hours in Teen Court.

SHOCK Education provides alternative sanctions for first- and second-time offenders to take a look at the non-glamorous side of crime and delinquent behavior; this program also accepts referrals from parents concerned that their child is at risk. More than 20 private and nonprofit agencies from the community assist in these presentations. Utilizing the expertise of these community agencies, subjects addressed included drugs, guns, violence, death, incarceration, sex, goal setting and family issues. Parents are offered a support group while the children participate in the program.

231 youths were referred to the SHOCK program in 2000, representing a 243% increase from the year before. 137 youths graduated.


Mediation and Diversion Services




Trained mediators work with parties involved in disputes to help them reach a mutually acceptable resolution of the dispute. Mediation offers people a means for peacefully settling disputes outside the courtroom. To do so is often less stressful and costly for all parties and it frees judicial officers and courtrooms for other cases. In celebration of Mediation Week, program staff promoted the mediation services provided by the court by distributing brochures and information on the Franklin Street Mall in November 2000. At their annual recognition breakfast, Paul McGuire, Deputy Director of Mediation, received the Joseph Klienbaum Memorial Award, while James Kelly, contract mediator, received the Robert A. Baker Memorial Award.

In May 2000, the Family Law Section of the Hillsborough County Bar Association presented their highest award, the Peacemaker Award, to Marty Merrell, Senior Court Operations Consultant.


Circuit Civil Diversion Program utilizes Supreme Court certified circuit mediators to resolve claims in excess of \$15,000 in value. The parties select the mediators and pay the mediator on an hourly basis.

 FAST FACTS ABOUT CIRCUIT CIVIL MEDIATION	
Referrals	676
Hearings	507
Resolved	299

Community Mediation originally known as the Citizen Dispute Settlement Program, was created in 1978 to give Hillsborough County residents the ability to resolve disputes prior to seeking relief through the courts. This program is free and there is no claim limit.

	FAST FACTS ABOUT COMMUNITY MEDIATION	
	Referrals	1,687
	Hearings	360
	Resolved	214


County Civil and Small Claims referrals are the result of actions less than \$15,000. County Civil cases exceed \$5,000, while small claims cases are less than \$5,000. Mediators are available in the courtrooms at the pre-trial hearings; as cases are referred by the judge, mediators take the parties to a conference room to assist them in resolving the case. While there is no charge for small claims mediations, each party in County Civil cases must pay \$50.

	FAST FACTS ABOUT COUNTY AND SMALL CLAIMS	
	Referrals	3,163
	Hearings	2,096
	Resolved	1,021

Dependency Mediation was established through grant funding in 1994 to assist families to discuss issues and to make informed, realistic plans for the children involved in court proceedings. Issues mediated include:

- **adjudication of dependency,**
- **case plan issues, such as counseling, drug evaluation, psychological evaluation, and parenting classes,**
- **placement and/or visitation, and**
- **termination of parental rights.**

Mediators in this program have received specialized training as required by the Florida Supreme Court. There is no charge for participants in this program. A new brochure was developed to help participants understand the mediation process in 2000.

	FAST FACTS ABOUT DEPENDENCY MEDIATION	
	Referrals	268
	Hearings	206
	Resolved	145

Family Mediation was originally created in 1984 to provide services for post-judgment custody and visitation cases. It has expanded over the years to provide a full range of services, including prejudgment dissolution, post-judgment and temporary relief. Issues mediated include:

- **custody and visitation,**
- **child support and alimony,**
- **use and disposition of the marital home,**
- **parenting responsibility,**
- **distribution of assets and liabilities, and**
- **grandparents' rights.**

Fees are based on a sliding scale and range from \$30 per person to \$110 per person but can be waived upon the court's determination of indigence.



Diane Williams distributes information celebrating Mediation Week.



FAST FACTS ABOUT FAMILY MEDIATION

Referrals	4,139
Hearings	2,159
Resolved	1,692

Guardianship Mediation assists parties to find viable solutions, while preserving family relationships. Specific issues addressed are placement and the ability of the ward to handle their own personal or financial affairs. Fees are paid through grant funding.

Peer Mediation began in Hillsborough County Schools in 1993. Since 1995, AOC has been a prime sponsor of the Students Talking Out Problems (STOP) Conference which salutes these students and offers them support through professional training.

Court Communications and Technology Services

Rendering support to the judiciary and AOC staff, this department oversees and provides technical support to all voice, video and data communication within the courts' complex. In addition, Court Communications and Technology Services, CCTS, researches and implements new technologies to improve current business practices of the court. Areas of responsibilities include:

- **administration and development of the courts' Local Area Network,**
- **maintenance of the computer learning lab,**
- **installation and training on all software and hardware applications,**
- **administration and training on telephones and fax machines, and**
- **support with audio and video services and video conferencing.**

The technologically enhanced judicial system was unveiled on May 1, 2000, in Courtroom 1 in the Main Courthouse. This Virtual Trial Courtroom is seamlessly integrated, which means the technology is not immediately apparent, maintaining the courtroom's dignity and decorum.



Judge Bonnano talks about technology issues in our circuit to members of the Bar Association.

"From the court's perspective," Judge Bonnano told people at the opening of the Virtual Trial Courtroom, "technology will absolutely speed up the trial process and will offer a more effective presentation of the case. The benefits of a computer-integrated courtroom will be most advantageous for judges. Gaining access to modern, technological information process tools will provide much greater efficiency."

Another highlight for CCTS in 2000 was the implementation of the Drug Court Case Management System, which began Phase One in July. This software application is Internet-based, which will enable judges, providers and staff to have up-to-date information on an offender at their fingertips.

As technology has become an integral part of the AOC operations, other jurisdictions come to Tampa to tour the facilities. Many of the services located in the Virtual Trial Courtroom are accessible in other courtrooms, and are also visible in court programs, such as the Children's Justice Center and Indigency Screening Unit.

The Children's Justice Center is moving away from videotape technology to a video server. Indigent Screening Unit has capitalized on available technology with the use of video court and in the application of video visitations. They have "dial in" capabilities for inmate interviews at the Falkenburg Jail.

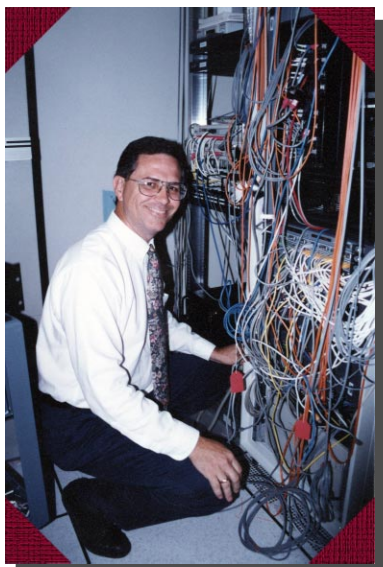
The most evident services can be seen at:

- Children's Justice Center,
- Preliminary Presentation or Video Arraignments,
- Video Detentions, and
- Courts Business Center

Other areas that provide invaluable support include:

- Case Management systems for programs, such as Witness Aid, Children's Justice Center, and Drug Court,
- LAN system, and
- Involvement in the design and implementation of the Comprehensive Court System, which electronically links all related agencies to share information.

Help Desk



The focal point for coordinating services provided by CCTS, the Help Desk provides assistance with:

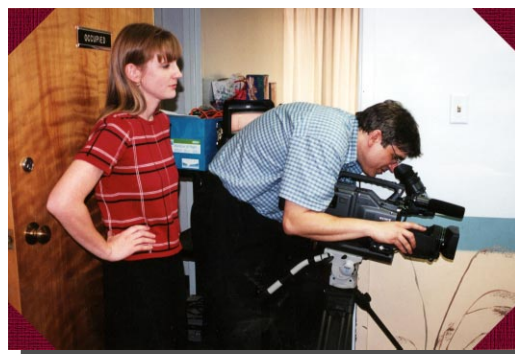
- audio/video support,
- computer training,
- fax equipment and servicing,
- jail video courtroom support,
- local area network,
- teleconferencing,
- telephone installation and support,
- video courtroom and,
- video courtroom technical support.

91% of staff responding to a satisfaction survey reported they were very satisfied or satisfied with services by Help Desk staff.

Courts Business Center

A public/private partnership between the AOC and a private vendor, this document management center maintains and services all copiers within the courthouse complex, as well as operating a full-service document production center. Services are generally available for both the public and court personnel. Some of the services available through the CBC include:

- document consulting services,
- document, design creation and layout,
- scanning services,
- copying, binding and laminating documents,
- audio/visual equipment rental for the courtroom,
- video duplication, and
- mail services.



CBC staff work with Public Information Office to produce videos.

With the creation of the newest court program, the Office of Public Information, production of multimedia presentations has been an excellent example of the public/private partnership.

Court Facilities



Juan Tirado renovates new space for the CJC.

Services provided by Hillsborough County departments, including Facilities, Real Estate, Architectural Services and Security are coordinated and managed through this department. In addition, trade workers and administrative support personnel are responsible for:

- **coordinating of parking,**
- **coordinating of all moves,**
- **coordinating of requests for assistance related to the Americans with Disabilities Act,**
- **renovating courtrooms and office space,**
- **wiring for audio/visual support.**

Court Facilities staff constructed new courtrooms in the Juvenile Dependency Division. They also renovated space for the expansion of the Children's Justice Center.

During 2000, several steps toward the Court Facilities Project were accomplished. With the assistance of an architect consultant, justice system organizations have been involved in planning the new courthouse complex to allow for the necessary expansion. The duration of the courthouse renovation project, which began in 1998, is expected to extend through 2007 and will involve major phases planned to provide an incremental transition and avoid disruption of court system operations. In the early fall of 2000, a construction manager was selected to complete a new six-story Family/Civil Court Building, which will house family law courts, civil courts, guardianship, probate & trust courts, and related court programs. The site for the new courthouse was cleared in the spring of 2001. Renovations of the 700 Twigg Street Building were completed in 2000, which allowed the Public Defender to relocate her offices during the summer months.

State Attorney



Twigg Street building was renovated in 2000.



Edgecomb demolition began in spring 2001.



Chief Judge surveys demolition site before operating the crane.

Fiscal Affairs

The Thirteenth Judicial Circuit has traditionally received funding from diversified sources, including revenue from the State of Florida and Hillsborough County. In general, the state budget operates on a continuation process and the county works on a modified zero base budget. The funding source dictates the fiscal year; Hillsborough County operates from October-September; State of Florida operates from July-June.

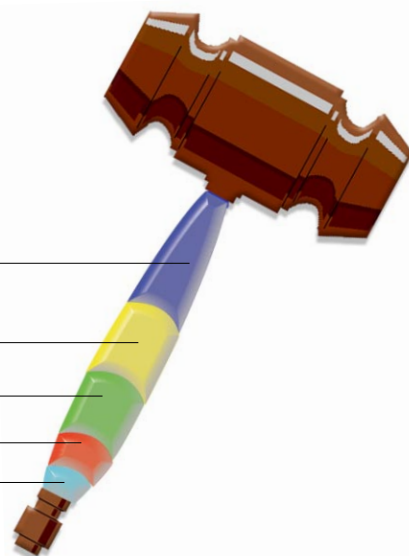
State revenue accounted for more than 40% of funding for the circuit and county courts, while Hillsborough County provided 23% of the allocated funds. Although Trust Funds and grant funds represent only 20% of the budget, this category of funding has continued to increase each fiscal year with the rise in Fine & Forfeiture revenue.

Funding Sources

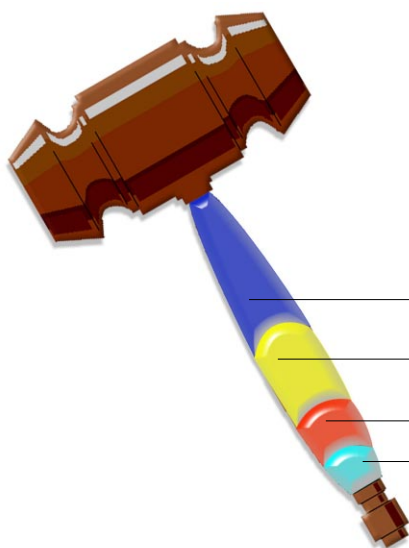
FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2000/2001

State Funds _____	\$11,607,341
County Funds _____	\$ 6,743,667
Fine & Forfeiture/Local Criminal Justice Trust Funds _____	\$ 5,699,704
State & Local Trust Funds _____	\$ 3,963,327
Grants & Donations _____	\$ 1,351,883

TOTAL SOURCES
\$ 29,365,922



Expenditures



\$ 19,567,043	Compensation
\$ 5,674,494	Court Appointed Attorneys and Court Reporter Costs
\$ 3,933,485	Other Operating Costs
\$ 190,900	Capital Equipment & Court Improvement

TOTAL EXPENDITURES
\$ 29,365,922

State Funds

Salaries and benefits of:

- **judges and judicial assistants,**
- **law clerks,**
- **positions in Court Administration,**

including family court support positions, Alternative Sanctions Coordinator, Guardian ad Litem and Indigency Examiner, Public Guardianship Program operations, partial funding of court reporter costs, Civil Traffic Infraction Hearing Officer costs, Drug Court Improvements and technology positions.

County Funds

Operating expenses of judicial offices, operational costs of Court Administration, legal research support for judges, technology support and Court Business Center operations salary and benefits of:

- **positions in Family Intake Unit, Child Custody Investigations, Guardian ad Litem, Indigent Screening Unit, Elder Justice Center, Drug Court treatment programs, Domestic Violence programs, Court appointed attorneys, court reporting and court interpreters' costs.**

Court Trust Funds and Grants

Traffic Infraction Hearing Officer operations, Child Support Hearing Officer, Mediation and Diversion programs, Teen Court support, court facility maintenance, renovations and improvements, juvenile protection programs, Elder Justice Center costs, partial funding of Article V costs.

Budget and Accounting

The AOC will continue to rely on both county and state revenue to support court operations during the next few years, but the legislation will affect operations at the local level if constituents are to continue to receive the level of services currently provided.

All revenue and expenditures are evaluated by staff in Fiscal Affairs to assure that court programs have the necessary resources to meet their objectives. The major functions of this program include:

- **budgeting,**
- **accounts payable,**
- **fiscal monitoring,**
- **special project evaluation, and**
- **revenue analysis.**

Balancing the requirement of funding sources, Fiscal Affairs works with representatives from the State of Florida, Hillsborough County and grant providers.

Through ordinances or administrative orders, several funds have been established to reduce the costs of court operations borne by the ad valorem taxpayer. Revenues are generated by specific fines and fees; expenditures are restricted to the programs identified in the orders. In addition to working closely with Court Personnel Resources, Fiscal Affairs provides oversight of contracts with agencies that provide court reporting service, domestic violence treatment, psychological and psychiatric evaluations for defendants and conflict attorneys.

99% of invoices were processed in less than 6 days; 54% of invoices were processed within 3 days.



Ralph Lazzara wins drawing during United Way Campaign.

The attraction, retention and development of the AOC's human resources are accomplished by improving organizational effectiveness by recruiting and hiring talented productive professionals. Other responsibilities include:

- **establishing and communicating clear and consistent employment policies and practices,**
- **recognizing and valuing each individual's unique skills and diverse abilities through performance measures,**
- **providing flexible employee programs in conjunction with competitive compensation and benefit plans, and**
- **empowering employees to encourage teamwork, innovative thinking and creative problem solving.**

The scope of responsibilities follows the career path of judges and employees from initial appointment or hire up to and through retirement planning. Staff from CPR continued preparation for Article V funding by serving on several statewide committees, including the Classification Committee and the Benefits Committee.

Employee events in 2000 included:

- **Bring Your Child to Work Day,**
- **United Way Fund Drive,**
- **Sexual Harassment In-service Training, and**
- **American Heart Walk.**

Almost sixty children, ages 5-17, participated in Bring Your Child to Work Day. Ninety-seven percent of children related they wanted to participate again; ninety-four percent of children rated the event "most satisfactory." The students toured the courthouse and witnessed a mock trial, Humpty Dumpty vs. Sherman King, which was coordinated by Joan Montagnano, Elder Justice Center.

Ending with a hot dog lunch, staff raised almost \$12,000 for the United Way through contributions, payroll deduction pledges and special events. CPR staff organized basket raffles to increase participation of employees.

FY 1999/2000 Statistics	
182	AOC Employees
49	Judges
26	Recruitments
99	Applications Processed
18	New Hires
29	Resignations
178	Benefit Actions

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION BANQUET



Janet Worthington received Employee of the Year Award.

Almost 200 people were on hand at the Centro Asturiano to celebrate the accomplishments of our employees at the annual recognition luncheon on May 11, 2001. This year's theme, *Who Wants to be a Court Employee?*, provided a backdrop for entertainment during the celebration. Warren Elly, WTVT FOX 13 news reporter, received the Chief Judge's award based on his contribution to the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit. The Chief Judge and the Court Administrator select one person each year to receive the Leadership Award. This year's recipient was David Rowland, Legal Department. Other nominations from employees for individual categories are received prior to the event and screened to ensure they meet the criteria specified in the award. The Nominating Committee, comprising a diverse representation of employees, reflecting our organizational culture, reviewed each of the nominations and made recommendations to the Court Administrator for final selection. The recipients of awards for contributions in 2000 were:

- **Helping Hand - Jose Robles, Court Facilities**
- **Outstanding Publication - Heather Thullbery and Kirby Jungers, Court Personnel Resources**
- **Quality of Excellence - Darren Alfonso, Elder Justice Center**
- **Innovative - Jeanette Munoz, Mediation Services**
- **Teamwork - Law Week Courthouse Tours Committee**
- **Risk Taker - Angie Smith, Office of Public Information**
- **Most Valuable Player - Elvira Pisacane, Fiscal Affairs**
- **Tessie Rosette/Judicial Assistant - Sharron Cosby**
- **Employee of the Year - Janet Worthington, Office of Public Information**



Judge Maye and Judge Pomponio hosted the event, playing *Let's Make a Deal*.



Staff from the Guardian ad Litem program and Fiscal Affairs battle in *Family Feud*.

Judges and staff have participated in community events in an effort to demystify the court process and to develop a greater awareness of the activities surrounding the court. We have highlighted a few of these efforts.



Students visit Preliminary Presentation Court during Law Week.

Ten employees utilized administrative leave to volunteer for community service programs outlined in the Governor's Mentoring Initiative. Almost twenty judges and staff participated in the Great American Teach-In during American Education Week in November 2000.

Working with members of the Hillsborough County Bar Association, the traditional courthouse tours for fifth grade students in Hillsborough County continued during Law Week. Hillsborough County Security made special arrangements to accommodate the more than 1,600 elementary students who were interested in learning more about the daily operations of the court.

Judges and staff are involved in justice system organizations which promote public trust and confidence in the system. Judge James Dominguez serves as Chairman of the Hillsborough County Public Safety Coordinating Council; the PSCC is a committee of community volunteers that reports to the Board of County Commissioners regarding public safety in Hillsborough County. Standing committees of the PSCC are the Alternatives to Incarceration and the Jail Population Forecasting Subcommittees; temporary committees such as Violence in School Subcommittee are convened when appropriate.

Other examples of service in justice system organizations include: Marshall Farkas, General Master, was elected to serve as president of the Tampa Family Law Inn of Court for the 2000-2001 year; Joe Navarra, as a member of the Judiciary Committee of the National Child Support Enforcement Association, presented "Genetic Test Excluding Person Previously Legally Established as the Father" at their annual conference in San Diego.



Rick Melendi hosts *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt* on *The Justice Files*.

The Justice Files, a monthly news magazine television program, is hosted by Lisa Davis, Children's Justice Center, and Charles Hanna, Legal Department. Each show features several segments about court programs or related activities to educate Hillsborough County's citizens; the show also features a game show segment, *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt*, hosted by Rick Melendi, Central Office.

Volunteers from various court programs conduct courthouse tours during Law Week and other scheduled times. Students and other community groups contact the Central Office to request tours, which include observation of court proceedings and interaction with staff members from various court programs.

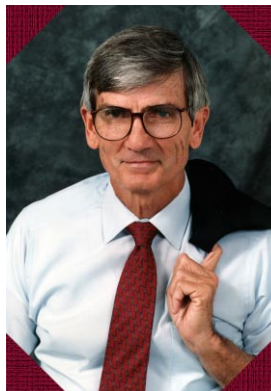


The Honorable Diana Allen
1945-2000

Hillsborough Circuit Court Judge for almost a decade, the Honorable Diana Allen died on July 29, 2000, at H. Lee Moffit Cancer Center. The 55-year-old judge was best known for dispensing justice in the criminal division, although she was assigned to the family law division when she began her career.

Elected to the circuit bench in 1990, Judge Allen had earned a reputation prosecuting sex crimes in the State Attorney's Office in the early 1980's. She worked six years as an assistant state attorney and after a series of promotions that landed her the position of Chief, Major Crimes Division, she left the public arena and entered private practice for seven years before donning the traditional black robe that accompanied her job as a judge.

A lifetime member of the Hillsborough United Methodist Church, Judge Allen is survived by her husband, Bill Brown, and their two children. Her friends and colleagues throughout the courthouse and community will miss her.



Harry Lee Coe
1932-2000

A public servant for three decades, State Attorney Harry Lee Coe, III, died on July 13, 2000. Joining the State Attorney's Office in 1964, he served as an assistant prosecutor. Three years later, he became the first attorney for the Hillsborough County Juvenile Court and was later named Chief Assistant County Solicitor. Beginning in 1970, Harry Lee Coe, III, became "Judge Coe," a name which remained with him until his death. First a judge for the Criminal Court of Record and later a circuit court judge, he held this position for more than two decades. He left the bench to pursue a career as the chief prosecutor in Hillsborough County and was sworn in as State Attorney of the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit on January 5, 1993. Re-elected in 1996, Harry Lee Coe served our community in this capacity until his death.

Instrumental in the development of our circuit's legal community, the loss was devastating to judges, attorneys, AOC staff and the public.

**For more information about us,
log onto: www.fljud13.org**

STATE OF FLORIDA COURT SYSTEM
THE THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

Welcome!

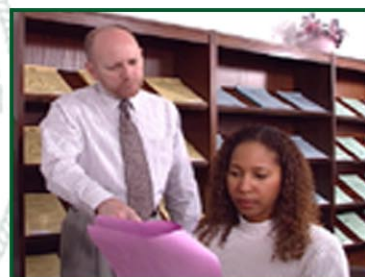
The judges and staff in the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit strive to bring the courts and the community closer together. We are committed to achieve this by making the courts more accessible to you.

You are invited to explore and share information about this circuit, which is comprised entirely of Hillsborough County. Please get acquainted with the programs in the Administrative Office of the Courts; these programs were created to serve both the judiciary and the public. Another example of how we are working to increase your access to the courts.

This site will be updated regularly and is an excellent source of what's happening in the courts. The best is yet to come!

If you have any questions or comments, please e-mail us at officeofpublicinformation@fljud13.org.

*¿Usted habla español?
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