

**DOMESTIC
RELATIONS
DIVISION**



**LUCAS
COUNTY
Court of
Common Pleas**

ANNUAL REPORT '81

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Assignment Commissioner's Report.....4
Bureau of Support.....13
Counseling Services.....8
Financial Report.....16
Letter to the Commissioners.....3
Referees.....11
Staff.....17

TO: The Honorable James M. Holzemer, President
Honorable Ray Kest
Honorable Frances E. Szollosi

The 1981 Annual Report of the Court of Common Pleas, Division of Domestic Relations is submitted to you as a descriptive account of the work produced by this Court. Changes in operations are noted, as are some changes in the laws in the Domestic Relations area. We hope you will find the report informative.

Respectfully submitted,

June Rose Galvin, Judge
Robert Dorrell, Judge

DOMESTIC RELATIONS ASSIGNMENT COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

The office of the Assignment Commissioner is responsible for monthly, quarterly and annual statistical reporting as is required by the Ohio Supreme Court Rules of Superintendance. The data compiled is used as part of a statewide survey of Domestic Court activity. I have presented the current years records as they best compare to the two immediately preceding years.

The Domestic Relations division has continued to maintain a relatively low number of pending cases as the preceding year. This is due in part to the continued trend toward reduced case filings of divorces. In 1981, there were 7½% fewer divorce cases filed than in 1980. Dissolution filings have decreased in 1981 by 12%. Although the new system of assigning final hearings on dissolutions when the attorneys file them is working out favorably between both the attorneys and this office.

In addition, the court in 1981 has maintained a median age of only four months for uncontested divorce cases and eight months for contested divorce cases.

Most notably, in 1981 there has been a dramatic increase in the number of hearings heard by the judges and referees in addition to the final divorce and dissolution hearings.

Rehearings, pre-trials, domestic violence and contempt (Bureau of Support) hearings are all in addition to the judges normal case load. The referees hear contempt (Bureau of Support) cases also in addition to their regular motion dockets. In 1981 the judges heard 1,613 extra hearings, whereas the referees heard 7,119 cases. The overall total of additional cases is 8,732, which gives the judges and referees a 53% increase in 1981.

Jackie Thomas
Assignment Commissioner

DOMESTIC RELATIONS - SUMMARY OF LEGAL ACTIONS

	1979	1980	1981
Total number of actions pending before the court January 1.....	1698	1566	1577
Divorce, alimony and annulment complaints filed.....	2552	2403	2215
Dissolution petitions filed.....	1285	1297	1140
Total number of cases before the court during the year.....	5535	5266	4932
Total number of cases disposed of.....	3969	3688	3455
Dissolutions terminated by hearing... Uncontested cases terminated by hearing.....	1186	1150	1082
Contested cases terminated by hearing.....	857	793	774
Cases dismissed.....	733	764	760
	1193	981	839
Total number of divorces pending before the court December 31.....	1326	1342	1309
Total number of dissolutions pending before the court December 31.....	240	236	168

NOTE:

Number of hearings on motions during 1981:

By judges

- a.) rehearings..... 468
- b.) pretrials..... 665
- c.) contempts (Bureau of Support)..... 188
- d.) domestic violence. 292

By referees..... 7,119

Total..... 8,732

DOMESTIC RELATIONS DIVISION REPORT

	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>
Cases pending before the court January 1...	1698	1566	1577
Divorce, alimony and annulment actions filed.....	2552	2403	2215
Dissolutions filed.....	1285	1297	1140
Divorces, alimony and annulment actions terminated.....	2636	2387	2247
Divorces terminated by dismissal.....	1046	830	713
Dissolutions terminated.....	1186	1150	1082
Dissolutions terminated by dismissal.....	147	151	126
Uncontested cases terminated.....	857	793	774
Median age.....	4 mos.	4 mos.	4 mos.
Contested cases terminated.....	733	764	760
Median age.....	8 mos.	8 mos.	8 mos.
Other hearings conducted:			
a.) By judges.....	1163	1830	1613
b.) By referees.....	3642	3881	7119
Gain (+) or loss (-) in cases pending at the end of the year.....	-132	+12	-100

DOMESTIC RELATIONS - A CONCISE RECORD SHOWING
THE NUMBER OF CASES FILED AND TERMINATED FOR THE YEAR

	COMPLAINTS FILED	DISSOLUTIONS FILED	COMPLAINTS GRANTED	COMPLAINTS DISMISSED	DISSOLUTIONS GRANTED	DISSOLUTIONS DISMISSED
1979	2552	1285	1690*	1046**	1186	147
1980	2403	1297	1557*	830	1150	151
1981	2215	1140	1534*	713	1082	126

1979* Includes 10 annulments granted

** Includes 2 divorces denied

1980* Includes 6 annulments granted

1981* Includes 4 annulments granted

* Includes 13 alimony only cases granted

COUNSELING SERVICES

A major policy and program area developed during the year was the result of passage of a joint custody law in Ohio. The Counseling staff had to address what areas of family life needed to be negotiated between the parents and included in writing as part of the joint custody plan. Staff also developed an outline of items that needed to be discussed with the parents to assist them in developing a strong and lasting co-parent relationship. Staff are cautious but enthusiastic about the possibilities joint custody offers for strengthening two-natural (biological or adoptive)-parent child-rearing after a divorce for some families. The meager research done in this area demonstrates that adequate access to both parents after a divorce results in healthy children. Access does not mean 50-50 time-sharing, which can be disruptive to some children while fine for others. Access means the physical and emotional availability of both parents to the children, availability that is not clouded by competing feelings of loyalty, etc., to the other parent, that are engendered by or not explained away by that other parent.

The Court Counseling Department has many duties that assist the violent, the divorcing or divorced family in their adjustment and assist the Court in its decision-making about custody and visitation. To that end, the following services are provided:

1. A counseling interview in divorce with each petitioner-parent of children under the age of 14 and a report to the Judge with recommendation.
2. A counseling interview with both parents filing a dissolution and a report to the Judge as above.
3. A counseling interview with each respondent-parent in a divorce who would like to discuss their views about the future for their children, and a report to the Judge as above.
4. A counseling interview with one or both parties when there are no children under the age of 14 if requested by the parties or by their attorneys.
5. Followup interviews where families are experiencing a great deal of distress, and counseling readiness and referral for ongoing services in the community.
6. A series of interviews with all family members when custody is contested between the parents and a report for the Judge.

7. Post-divorce change of custody request investigations and reports.
8. Post-divorce visitation-problem investigations and reports.
9. Assistance to each domestic violence victim as they file their motion and counseling.
10. Assistance to parents experiencing divorce-related problems, especially faulty communication with their co-parent, who have not filed an action in the Court.
11. A Christmas-Holiday emergency visitation intervention program.
12. Pre-marriage counseling for under-age pregnant juvenile couples and their families.
13. Reports for out-of-town and out-of-state Courts as requested.

All of these services are provided as quickly as possible to avoid unnecessarily prolonging the legal process.

Michele M. MacFarlane
Administrator

FAMILY EVALUATION

<u>Cases Opened</u>	1979	1980	1981
Divorce	1380	1337	1259
Dissolution	627	620	554
Special Problems in Divorce	6	13	12
Out of Town	8	7	3
Domestic Violence	188	303	296
Post Divorce Custody and Visitation	79	81	101
Joint Custody			1
 <u>Client Interviews</u>	 4641	 4649	 5694
<u>Contacts on Closed Cases</u>	**	**	2219

** Statistics not recorded

FAMILY COUNSELING

	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>
Supervision/Counseling	2	6	2
Domestic Violence	59	81	77
Mediation			1

CHRISTMAS-ONLY VISITATION PROGRAM

	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>
Total number families served	36	30
Total number counselor contacts	110	92

PREMARRIAGE COUNSELING FOR JUVENILES

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>NO. OF CASES</u>
1979	19
1980	34
1981	9

REFEREES

The following reflects the work of the Domestic Relations Referees on an assigned-hearing-time docket system, on motions filed during pending marriage termination proceedings or after marriage termination. Beginning July 1, 1981, post-divorce cases were no longer certified to Juvenile Court. These are now kept in Domestic Relations.

The Domestic Relations Motions include child support, injunctions, temporary alimony, evictions of persons from the home in pending divorce actions, temporary custody and visitation, domestic violence hearings, emergency visitation and companionship, and contempt. Motions in prior marriage termination cases certified to the Juvenile Division include child support; contempt; lump sum judgments; increase, decrease, suspend or terminate child support; payroll deductions; and custody and visitation matters, and emergency visitation and companionship.

A Custody Referee regularly handles three main categories of cases:

- 1) Post Divorce Change of Custody - Actions of divorced parties seeking to change custody from one party to another.
- 2) Visitation and Companionship - Actions by divorced parties seeking to change, modify or terminate the rights of the other party to see the children.
- 3) Motions to Show Cause/Contempt of Court - Actions by parties to enforce visitation or orders of the Court dealing with money.

The Court also has a post-divorce pre-trial procedure where each contested custody situation is evaluated prior to investigation. The pre-trial is used to evaluate the necessity for an investigation and to attempt to resolve the case. The pre-trial conferences often result in no investigation being necessary. This has helped to reduce the time between filing of the motion and the actual hearing.

	<u>1979</u>	1890	1981
Domestic Relations Motions Filed	2271	2997	4303
Domestic Relations Hearings	3606	3916	5579
Certified Motions Filed	1416	1791	681
Certified Hearings Scheduled	1855	2385	1147

David Taylor
Chief Referee

Frances Nicholas
Assignment Commissioner,
Motions

BUREAU OF SUPPORT

In 1981, the Lucas County Bureau of Support completed the transfer of some 15,000 payment records from a manual system to a totally automated on-line computer system.

Cash payments are now processed the same day as received and disbursements are made through the use of a data check mailer and a crash imprinter signature plate. The new computer system has streamlined all accounting procedures, which had been a high priority item since the inception of this Bureau.

The second phase of computerizations is well under way with the goal of updating all cases on record by the end of 1982. This massive job requires that each case be checked for the accuracy of all data, plus the addition of any data not computerized but presently available in each case file. Coupled with this process, each case must be audited to determine the proper arrearage for each case.

Through the use of the computer and the programs developed specifically for the needs pursuant to the laws of the State of Ohio, mandatory enforcement of delinquent cases had begun in conjunction with phase two of the computerization of the Bureau. Presently, from the date of initial complaint, an administrative hearing is normally set within two (2) weeks. If further Court action is required, the case is then scheduled for hearing before the Court. Under most circumstances, this can be accomplished within ninety (90) days of initial complaint. Through improved enforcement techniques, it is our goal to reduce this turnaround time and improve service to those utilizing the Bureau.

During the last part of 1981, all active payment records from the Juvenile Court Cashier were transferred to the Bureau to administer support payments.

Total collections increased 21% over 1980 totals while Welfare collections increased 23% over the same period. A cost effective ratio of \$28.05 collected for every \$1.00 expended can be compared to the National average of \$3.30 collected for every \$1.00 expended. In three years of operation, total collections were increased by \$5,714,632.00 and Welfare collections were increased by \$423,769.00 over the 1979 totals. Substantial increases in Enforcement activity are evident.

Joseph Pilat
Director

LUCAS COUNTY BUREAU OF SUPPORT

STATISTICAL RECAP

	1979	1980	1981
TOTAL COLLECTIONS	\$10,007,715.95	\$13,046,195.32	\$15,722,347.23
WELFARE COLLECTIONS			
LCWD	1,183,613.84	1,274,809.65	1,502,867.61
OUT OF COUNTY/STATE	89,618.74	108,041.62	194,133.13
POUNDAGE	148,942.41	193,356.03	230,456.19
INCENTIVE			
LCWD	177,498.43	190,582.78	225,720.35
OUT OF COUNTY/STATE	14,516.09	16,387.74	29,119.59
COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT	275,070.24	264,964.95	291,974.18
EXPENSES	\$ 383,446.91	\$ 487,890.01	\$ 560,605.94
ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY			
Administrative Letters Sent	1,535	2,942	5,254
Administrative Hearings Held	791	4,774	5,249
Court Hearings	20	51	47
Cases Scheduled for Court Hearings	487	1,278	920
Arrearage Statements by Request	278	1,539	3,352
Wage Assignments Taken by Adminis. Enf.	n/a	n/a	864
Wage Assignments Taken by Court Hearing	n/a	n/a	148
Lump Sum Payments Taken by Adminis. Enf.	n/a	n/a	\$ 105,870.47
Lump Sum Payments Taken by Court Hearing	n/a	n/a	13,088.00
DR Orders Processed	n/a	n/a	4,866
JC Orders Processed	n/a	n/a	3,329
Payee Checks Written	n/a	172,037	177,090

DOMESTIC RELATIONS

COLLECTIONS

	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>
Support for Minor Children and Alimony	\$13,046,195.32	\$15,722,347.23
Poundage for Child Support and Alimony	\$ 193,356.03	230,456.19
Family Evaluation Fee	40,325.00	39,900.00
Custody Investigation Fee	2,300.00	4.450000
Court Costs - Domestic Relations Cases	131,933.33	136,056.52
Court Costs - Certified Cases (post Divorce)	21,027.00	41,342.00
Incentive Payments and Reimbursements, Welfare Department through Bureau of Support	<u>190,582.78</u>	<u>225,720.35</u>
 TOTAL RETURNED TO COUNTY GENERAL FUND	 \$ 579,524.14	 \$ 677,925.06

F.E. Landry
Business Manager

STAFF OF DOMESTIC RELATIONS DIVISION

1981

Robert Dorrell, Judge
June Rose Galvin, Judge

BUREAU OF SUPPORT

Joseph Pilat, Director
James Armacost
Linda Bauer
Anthony Burks
Jill Droll
Elana Echols
Jose Gonzalez
Walter Graff
Linda Harpst
Rebecca Hetrick
Walter Katz
Linda Marvet
Peggy Mayo
Darlene Metz
Linda Miller
Donna Mohn
John Neenan, Jr.
Janet Pawlowski
Karen Poronczuk
Donna Quinlan
Clifford Quinn
Minnie Quinn
Carol Rimmer
Faylayn Silverman
Linda Silverman
Maricarol Torsok
Craig Trares
Judy Updegraff
Gail Wooddell
Shirley Wrede

COUNSELING DEPARTMENT

Michele MacFarlane, Administrator
Bruce Beckwith
Maryam Berta
Charlie Grice
Patricia Gross
Philip Halloran
Linda King
Marcia LaBonte
Louise Mustapich
Amanda Porter
Diane Schregardus
Barbara Smith
Sandra Sniegowski

COURT STAFF

Assignment commissioners

Michelle Thomas
Francis Nicholas

Bailiffs

Patrick Quinlan
Donal Hummer

Court Reporters

Lynn Kolling
Ann Ray

Secretaries/Typists

Barbara Boyd
Linda McBee
Carolyn Shelt

SUPPORT & CUSTODY DEPARTMENT
REFEREES

David Taylor, Chief Referee
Kenneth Boyd
Leon Frankel
Marilyn Klar
Edward Kurt
Mojdeh Behjati
Elinor Taylor
Rebecca Tuckerman



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FAMILY COURT CENTER

