

Connecticut Probate Courts



Vital to the Safety Net

2014-2015 BIENNIAL REPORT
OFFICE OF THE PROBATE COURT ADMINISTRATOR

Dedication

CHIEF CLERK BARBARA A. CARBINO

1942 – 2015

The 2014-2015 Biennial Report is dedicated to Barbara A. Carbino, chief clerk of the Greenwich Probate Court for 23 years, who died February

2, 2015. Barbara became a temporary employee at the court while in high school and was hired full time in 1960. After a 12-year hiatus to raise her children, she returned to the court in 1981 and 10 years later was named chief clerk, a position she held at the time of her death. Although not formally trained as an attorney, Barbara knew the law, and lawyers doing business with the court relied on her expertise. She operated in a benevolent but firm manner. Barbara made sure that all who had matters before the court were treated fairly and with dignity, respect and compassion. She considered her deep passion for her work at the court one of her greatest accomplishments. Barbara is widely remembered as the heart and soul of the Greenwich Probate Court.





A Message from **Judge** **Paul J. Knierim**

accounted for more than half of the courts' total matters, surpassing the combined categories of estate and trust matters for the first time in history in fiscal year 2014-2015. The cost of handling those cases represents nearly two thirds of our budget.

Why these trends? Several reasons come quickly to mind. People are living longer. Residential psychiatric facilities have been shuttered, hospital stays are shorter and home care arrangements are favored over long-term nursing home placements. Lawmakers have enacted greater protections for vulnerable populations at the same time that state agencies and non-profits have had to cut services.

As a direct consequence of these developments, Probate Courts are seeing more cases in the areas of conservatorship, commitment, guardianship of adults with intellectual disability and children's matters. The cases are increasingly complex and demand more and more court resources. For example, the cost of providing conservators for indigent seniors and individuals with mental illness has increased more than twofold in the past five years.

Yet in some ways our work actually reduces the need for expensive state services for many of our vulnerable citizens. We achieve this by helping families help themselves. Courts

It is time to debunk the myth that the primary function of the Probate Courts is to oversee the settlement of decedents' estates.

It's true that estate matters have long represented the largest single category of court workload. But the Probate Courts have taken on many additional responsibilities over the years. The Probate Court system in the 21st century is an integral part of Connecticut's safety net for children, the elderly and individuals with mental illness or intellectual disability. Cases involving these residents

appoint relatives (most often grandparents) as guardians for children when addiction, mental illness or incarceration prevents the parents from providing care. Many of these children would be in the foster care system, at far greater cost to the state, if not for the opportunity to live with family members.

Similarly, Probate Courts appoint conservators (here again, most often family members). Conservators are responsible for all aspects of care for citizens whose dementia, mental illness or other disabilities make them unable to manage their housing, nutrition, medical care and other basic needs. Without the ongoing support of conservators, many of these individuals would be unable to live in the community, instead requiring hugely expensive institutional care.

The Probate Court system is a lean operation. Since consolidating courts in 2011, we have returned more than \$16 million in savings to the state's general fund. Thanks to our longstanding partnership with cities and towns, most of our courts are housed in city and town halls, thereby minimizing facility-related expenses.

This makes the work of the Probate Courts invaluable and cost-effective for Connecticut. In the following pages, you will read about how our courts help strengthen families by giving at-risk children and families special attention through the regional children's probate courts, anti-truancy clinics and grant programs. You will read about partnerships designed to end the "revolving door" of crisis intervention, incarceration or hospitalization and release for individuals with severe mental illness. And you will read about our participation in a statewide project to help prevent abuse of vulnerable seniors and to address other important elder justice issues.

The next time you hear the Probate Court system mentioned, I hope what comes to mind is the image of an effective partner rooted in the communities we serve and committed to the mission of helping citizens who face precarious circumstances. Gone, indeed, is the Probate Court of our grandparents' days – although one tenet will never change: honoring our tradition of ensuring justice in a forum that is both accessible and approachable for those who need our services.

Paul J. Knierim
Probate Court Administrator



A Partner with the Communities We Serve

The Probate Courts are known as the people's courts for many reasons. The rules of procedure are designed to make the courts accessible and approachable for attorneys and non-attorneys alike. These same rules promote quick resolution of cases at the least expense possible for the parties. Judges don't wear robes. They discuss matters with parties while seated around a simple table and often travel to hospitals, nursing homes and other facilities to conduct hearings. Wherever they sit, judges are peacekeepers, resolving family and other dilemmas as equitably as possible for all concerned.

The Probate Courts also interact with their communities in a way that few other government institutions do in Connecticut. In addition to administering wills, trusts and estate matters after death, the courts are intrinsically connected to a range of matters that encompass both the greatest joys and deepest challenges of daily living. A child is adopted into a stable home. A homeless person is returned to a safe living environment with the help of a court-appointed conservator. The parents of a child with intellectual disability can envision a more secure future for their child after the court appoints a standby guardian who will take over if they can no longer care for the child. Adult children receive help from the court in resolving end-of-life decisions for an elderly parent. A child succeeds in school because of the court's work with families on truancy issues.

These scenarios touch on the major categories of Probate Court jurisdiction that link the courts and community in sensitive, highly personal ways. The categories include:

- **Children's matters.** The courts hear several different types of cases involving children, including temporary custody and guardianship, termination of parental rights, visitation, adoption, emancipation and paternity. Most of the guardianship matters involve parents who are unable to care for their children as a result of mental illness, addiction or incarceration. A family member is

often appointed as guardian to care for the child. Some 6,400 children are currently cared for by relatives under this framework.

- **Conservatorships.** The courts appoint conservators to manage the care and finances of adults who are found unable to do so themselves due to conditions such as dementia, mental illness, intellectual disability or severe physical illness. The court determines whether a person needs a conservator, appoints one or more persons to serve in the role and supervises conservators on an ongoing basis. The court also provides instruction to the conservator on issues such as critical medical decisions and placement of the conserved person in a nursing home.

- **Guardianships for adults with intellectual disability.** The courts handle Connecticut's special form of guardianship for adults with intellectual disability. The courts determine if an individual has intellectual disability, whether a guardian is needed and, if so, who should serve as guardian. The court also conducts periodic reviews of guardianships to determine whether the arrangement continues to be necessary.

- **Commitments.** The courts hear several different types of cases regarding involuntary confinement for treatment of mental illness, substance abuse and infectious diseases. In mental health cases, the courts determine whether a person is dangerous or gravely disabled and, in some cases, whether a conservator should have authority to consent to the involuntary administration of psychotropic medication. Probate jurisdiction also encompasses appeals from quarantine, isolation and vaccination orders issued during a public health emergency.

In most of these matters, the Probate Courts, while rigorously safeguarding individuals' rights, are also providing a core government service that is critical to the integrity of the state's safety net. Without the work of the courts, more children would be displaced, more families would be disrupted, and more



individuals would be admitted to hospitals, nursing homes and other facilities – or wandering the streets. And the courts' work is cost-effective. When the Probate Courts place children with guardians, the cost to the state is far less than if the children were placed in the foster care system. When the courts appoint a conservator to help a person with mental illness live in the community, the state saves tens – if not hundreds – of thousands of dollars in hospital costs.

The Probate Courts' program manager for mental health and family programs and the chief clerk for children's matters support the staff and judges, arrange continuing education programs and coordinate efforts with DCF and community agencies that provide services to children and families.

The six regional children's probate courts and communities served are:

- The New Haven Regional Children's Probate Court, established in 2004. Judge John A. Keyes of the New Haven Probate Court is the administrative judge. Communities served: Bethany, Branford, East Haven, Hamden, Milford, New Haven, North Branford, North Haven, Orange and West Haven
- The Central Connecticut Regional Children's Probate Court, established in 2005. Judge Philip A. Wright, Jr., of the Wallingford Probate Court is the administrative judge. Communities served: Cheshire, Cromwell, Durham, East Haddam, East Hampton, Marlborough, Meriden, Middlefield, Middletown, Portland, Southington and Wallingford
- The New London Regional Children's Probate Court, established in 2006. Judge Jeffrey A. McNamara of the Niantic Regional Probate Court is the administrative judge. Communities served: East Lyme, Groton, Ledyard, Montville, New London, North Stonington, Old Lyme, Salem, Stonington and Waterford
- The Northeast Regional Children's Probate Court, established in 2007. Judge Leah P. Schad of the Northeast Probate Court is the administrative judge. Communities served: Ashford, Brooklyn, Canterbury, Chaplin, Colchester, Coventry, Eastford, Hampton, Killingly, Lebanon, Mansfield, Plainfield, Pomfret, Putnam, Scotland, Sterling, Thompson, Tolland, Willington, Windham and Woodstock
- The Waterbury Regional Children's Probate Court, established in 2007. Judge Thomas P. Brunnock of the Waterbury Probate Court is the administrative judge. Communities served: Bethlehem, Oxford, Roxbury, Southbury, Washington, Waterbury, Watertown, Woodbury and Wolcott
- The Hartford Regional Children's Probate Court, established in 2012. Judge Steven M. Zelman of the Tobacco Valley Probate Court is the administrative judge. Communities served: Andover, Avon, Bloomfield, Bolton, Burlington, Canton, Columbia, East

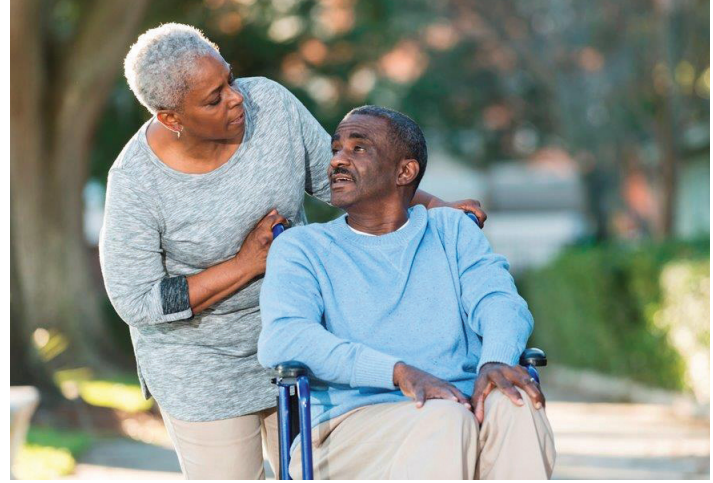
COURTS IN THE COMMUNITY

Case Type	FY 14	FY 15
Mental Health Matters	19,366	20,465
Children's Matters	10,245	10,959
Intellectual Disability Matters	6,262	8,194
Kinship & Respite Children Served	4,768	4,945

Each time the Probate Courts take up a matter, the tendrils of court work wind more deeply through Connecticut's social landscape. The courts perform their sensitive, important work according to a 300-year-old formula of dedication to service, integrity and the rule of law, and with the goal of doing so promptly and efficiently. Whether providing urgent, life-sustaining measures in the short term or working long term to help families and individuals live their most independent lives, the Probate Courts each day demonstrate their integral role in and steadfast commitment to the communities they serve.

Regional Children's Probate Courts

The six regional children's probate courts provide a forum for families to arrange for the care of children when parents are unable to do so. Informal hearings, comfortable court facilities and compassionate judges and court staff put families at ease as they work out problems. A family conference conducted by a court employee with advanced training in child and family dynamics is scheduled shortly after the case commences and before the hearing with the judge. The conference brings together the family with representatives from the Department of Children and Families and court-appointed attorneys to develop the most beneficial plan for children's care. The goal is to keep children in the care of family members in a safe and familiar home environment whenever possible. Court employees also help families obtain needed services and monitor progress toward the goals set by the court.



Granby, East Hartford, East Windsor, Enfield, Farmington, Glastonbury, Granby, Hartford, Hebron, Manchester, Newington, Rocky Hill, Simsbury, Somers, South Windsor, Stafford, Suffield, Union, West Hartford, Wethersfield, Windsor and Windsor Locks

Truancy Clinics at the Regional Children's Probate Courts

The Waterbury Regional Children's Probate Court, with the Waterbury public school system, pioneered the Probate Courts' first truancy clinic for at-risk students. Begun in 2008 under the leadership of Administrative Judge Thomas P. Brunnock, the voluntary, non-punitive program became the model for future clinics at other courts. In 2014, the General Assembly amended the law to expand the clinic to the New Haven Regional Children's Probate Court. That year, Administrative Judge John A. Keyes, the court staff and the New Haven public school district launched an attendance and engagement clinic at two city elementary schools. In 2015, the General Assembly amended the law to allow for the expansion of the clinics to any Probate Court that serves one or more towns designated as an alliance school district by the commissioner of education, contingent on funding.

The clinics work with elementary school students and their parents and guardians to address health problems and other systemic causes of unexcused absence from the classroom. A probate judge conducts the sessions to signal the importance of the program and give participants the confidence that they are working with a fair and trustworthy community leader. The clinics are not judicial proceedings, however, and do not result in court orders or punitive measures. Clinics are designed to help families identify and resolve the causes of absences in a supportive environment. Collaboration with the local school board and the Department of Children and Families enables the clinic to make appropriate services available to the family and deliver them in a coordinated manner. The clinics tailor their approach to each family and set clear expectations for attendance.

“The (truancy) clinic helped make families aware of the importance of school attendance. The numbers speak for themselves as to the success of the program. However, more important are the successes which are not represented by numbers alone, i.e., the positive relationships the clinic helped to establish between the school and the families.”
—*Michael Theriault, principal, Driggs Elementary School, Waterbury*

In his 2015 report to the legislature, Judge Keyes reported

positive changes in attendance and tardiness of 47 percent at one New Haven school and 28 percent at the other school after one full academic year. The court was poised in 2015 to introduce a clinic at a third elementary school. Judge Brunnock, who has conducted clinics at five schools in Waterbury for varying amounts of time, reported a 61 percent reduction in unexcused absences among students at one school. At two other schools, unexcused absences declined by 80 percent and 75 percent. The Waterbury clinic terminated operations at the end of the 2015 school year.

Kinship Fund and Grandparents and Relatives Respite Fund

The Kinship Fund and the Grandparents and Relatives Respite Fund offer critical assistance to relatives serving as court-appointed guardians as they provide for the children in their care. Unlike foster parents, guardians appointed by Probate Courts are not eligible for monthly stipends from the state. The grant programs seek to fill that gap by providing financial help for basic needs. Guardians must meet income guidelines to be eligible for the grants. Kinship Fund grants award families up to \$500 per child annually to buy needed school items and services for their children, such as school clothes and supplies, tutoring, summer camp and music lessons, and eyeglasses and dental care. The Grandparents and Relatives Respite Fund gives qualified guardians annual grants of up to \$2,000 for assistance in the areas of child care, transportation and housing.

The General Assembly funded the programs at \$2.05 million in 2014 and 2015. In 2014, the kinship fund provided assistance to 1,624 families with 2,397 children, while grants from the respite fund benefited 1,618 families with 2,371 children. In 2015, grants from the kinship fund were awarded to 1,647 families, helping 2,383 children. Grants from the respite fund benefited 1,787 families with 2,562 children.

New Haven Probate Court Service Center

The New Haven Probate Court Service Center oversees the Kinship Fund and the Grandparents and Relatives Respite

Fund in New Haven. The center also runs the Extended Family Guardianship and Assisted Care Program, which provides outreach to individuals who are interested in serving as guardians for non-relative children to avoid foster care placement outside of the home community. The program trains caregivers in conflict resolution, anger management, parenting and other skills. The service center hosts occasional community events that celebrate program successes.

Melissa's Project

The Probate Court system provides \$157,000 in annual funding for Melissa's Project, a non-profit organization that performs case coordination and conservator services for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness. A program of Guardian Ad Litem Services, Inc. (Guardian), Melissa's Project helps people with serious and persistent mental health disorders who may be at risk for incarceration or hospitalization to live as independently as possible in the community. The project connects individuals for whom conservators have been appointed with an array of services to ensure the best possible access to health care and community support. The program has proven effective in reducing arrests, incarcerations and hospitalizations for program participants.

Working with the Probate Courts and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), Melissa's Project has doubled the number of people it serves to 250 individuals since the last biennial report. The program also expanded its geographic base to encompass the Bridgeport, Hartford and Middletown areas in addition to serving clients in the Waterbury, Danbury, New Haven, Torrington, New Britain and Norwich areas.

The expansion of services followed a significant increase in funding for Melissa's Project by the General Assembly. After the 2012 school shooting in Newtown, a legislative panel recommended promoting programs that coordinate and manage services for individuals with mental illness who are living in the community. Most of the \$1.55 million the project receives annually comes from DMHAS, with a portion coming from the Probate Court Administration Fund.

In 2014, PCA and Guardian launched a pilot program that gives several Probate Courts an additional resource as they appoint conservators for people with serious mental illness. Under the pilot program, Guardian serves as the court-appointed conservator of the person for 31 individuals in Hartford, New Haven, Middletown and some neighboring communities.



Children in Placement

The Children in Placement Connecticut program trains people to serve as volunteer guardians ad litem so they can advocate for the best interests of children who are in court as the victims of abuse or neglect. The organization provided advocates for 133 children in 2014 and 138 children in 2015 whose cases came before the Probate Courts.

Coalition for Elder Justice in Connecticut

The Probate Courts participate in the coordinating council of the State Department on Aging's Coalition for Elder Justice in Connecticut. The council seeks to prevent elder abuse, protect the rights of vulnerable elderly citizens and promote their independence, security and well-being. The Probate Courts work with other public and private stakeholders on the council to

address key elder justice issues and advise and participate in the coalition's action teams.

"I have had the opportunity to help elderly clients stay in their homes, young adults with mental illness avoid jail and homelessness and clients of all ages transition out of residential facilities back into their communities. After more than a decade practicing in the Probate Courts, I am still amazed by how invested each judge and clerk is in the overall outcome of the lives of each conserved person."

— Attorney Katrina K. Camera, *Schafner & Camera, Attorneys at Law, Shelton*



Office of the Probate Court Administrator

The Connecticut General Assembly established the Office of the Probate Court Administrator in 1967 to provide administrative and legal support to the courts and promote uniform procedures throughout the Probate Court system. The Chief Justice appoints the Probate Court Administrator from among the sitting probate judges. The functions of the office include:

- Administrative and legal support
- Technological and computer support
- Financial oversight, analysis and projections
- Centralized budget administration, banking management and payroll
- Educational programs
- Policy leadership and legislative initiatives
- Establishment of uniform procedures
- Publication of materials to assist court users

The office has four departments that often work collaboratively with other state agencies: communications and intergovernmental relations, financial services, information technology and law. Three accomplishments in 2014 and 2015 deserve special attention, including two that have helped to protect the safety and security of Connecticut's citizens.

- A multi-agency initiative spearheaded by the Probate Courts enables state and federal law enforcement authorities to use a computer database to check the mental health backgrounds of citizens who seek to buy or own firearms. The web-based, secure module, funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, efficiently captures mental health adjudications in probate and criminal proceedings. The database includes mental health commitments, involuntary conservatorships and findings of incompetency to stand trial and not guilty by reason of insanity, all of which disqualify an individual from purchasing or possessing firearms. The module replaces the labor-intensive process of faxing forms to various state agencies. Now, the information is transmitted electronically on a daily basis so that the FBI's National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) is fully up to date. Law enforcement

"The Probate Courts every day, in every town, stand as the last bulwark of protection for the financially abused elders in our system. Probate judges are specially trained to recognize potentially abusive situations and they are able to move quickly and surely to intervene to protect those citizens."

— *Attorney Kelley Galica Peck, Robinson & Cole, Hartford*

uses NICS to determine eligibility for firearms purchases. The Office of Policy and Management coordinated the

project grants, with participation from DMHAS, the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection and the Judicial Branch. The project was known as NARIP – The NICS Act Record Improvement Program.

- The Ebola virus made a global appearance in 2014, leading the Governor to issue a precautionary declaration of a public health

emergency in Connecticut. When public health emergency declarations are in effect, the Probate Courts have an important role in protecting the public while also safeguarding civil liberties of individuals. The courts are the venue to appeal a public health official's order to isolate, quarantine or vaccinate an individual or group at risk for transmitting a communicable disease. The Probate Court system acquired mobile videoconferencing technology so that a party who may be contagious can participate in a hearing from a remote location without creating risks for other parties, the public or court staff.

- In 2015, the Probate Courts concluded the final scheduled phase of the effort to preserve historic Probate Court records using updated technology. Begun in 2010, the records preservation project was designed to help the courts meet the challenges of storing and providing access to records as the Probate Courts were restructured. The vast majority of court record books since 1921 have now been digitally scanned and are available for viewing at the courts.

Communications and Intergovernmental Relations Department

The department maintains the ctprobate.gov website, publishes user guides and disseminates information to the public and the media. It also develops the legislative initiatives of the Probate Courts. The department works with cities and towns to provide suitable facilities for the Probate Courts.

- The courts added a case look-up feature to ctprobate.gov for estate and trust matters. Through the case lookup, users can determine which court is handling an estate or trust matter

and find contact information for the executor, trustee and attorney. The website includes court forms and user guides that provide general guidance in court matters, the Probate Court Rules of Procedure and agendas and minutes of all Probate Assembly and committee meetings.

- A new Probate Court intranet contains a wealth of resources for judges and court staff. Features of the internal website include a library of Probate Court practice and policy documents, continuing education materials, newsletters, calendars and announcements. Frequent updates make the intranet a go-to resource for providing more efficient service and expanding opportunities for communication between PCA and judges and court staff.

- PCA, working with the Probate Assembly's Public Information Committee, unveiled a colorful set of presentation panels that provide an overview of the Probate Courts. The panels circulate among judges for use in their educational talks at senior centers, libraries and other community forums.

- The Probate Courts streamlined the process for requesting accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Each court has a designated ADA contact who answers questions from the public about access to court facilities and handles requests for accommodations such as assistive listening devices and sign language interpreters. The list of ADA contacts for each court and ADA forms and materials are found at ctprobate.gov.

Financial Services Department

The financial services department is responsible for budgeting, revenue collection, payroll, benefits administration and accounts payable.

- The years following the 2011 restructuring of the Probate Courts brought major changes to the financial and personnel operations of the courts. The previous biennial report describes the successful transition, including the adoption of a uniform, equitable compensation and benefits plan and employee performance evaluation system for court staff. One task remained from consolidation, however: assessing how the new salary ranges for court staff compared with pay ranges for external positions with similar duties. An independent consultant hired to study the matter found that relevant employers, including the state's judicial and executive branches, court systems in neighboring states and Connecticut law firms, paid more than the Probate Courts for comparable work. In 2014, following approval by the Probate Court Budget Committee, the Probate Courts adopted a graduated pay structure that brings court staff pay rates more in line with market rates for similar work. The new rates were being phased in, with the first installment occurring in fall 2015.



- Half of the courts underwent audits in 2013 and the other half in 2014. The latest set of financial reviews focused on the various policies included in the PCA Policy Manual covering payroll and timekeeping responsibilities in the courts, probate fee billings, accounts receivable and cash collections, and court expenditures.

- Since 2014, court users have had a convenient option to pay for court fees by credit or debit card, in addition to paying by cash and check.

Information Technology Department

The information technology (IT) department maintains the Probate Courts' computer network, develops the software applications used to manage cases and operates a help desk for judges and court staff.

- At the heart of most of the IT department's work is the electronic case management system (CMS) that organizes the files of the approximately 90,000 matters the courts handle each year. A major initiative integrated the courts' document management system, known as Laserfiche, into CMS. The result is vastly simplified filing and retrieval of court documents. By eliminating the need

to enter the same information in two distinct programs, the interface saves court staff time, enabling clerks to serve the public more swiftly. More significantly, the interface sets the stage for changing how the public and attorneys will interact with the Probate Courts in the future. The technology upgrade lays the foundation for establishing online access to non-confidential court documents and is a precursor to an electronic filing system that will give court users the option to interact with the courts in a paperless manner.

- To ensure the success of the CMS-Laserfiche interface, the data-transmission capabilities of court computers needed to be improved. PCA replaced DSL service with cable Internet service for the courts, enhancing the performance and speed of computers and improving the reliability of back-up systems.
- In 2014, the courts acquired software that enables court computers to make audio recordings of hearings. Recording courtroom hearings through a computer instead of an external device has saved court staff time by simplifying the process for filing recordings in CMS.

Law Department

Attorneys in the law department provide advice and expertise to judges, court staff and the Probate Assembly committees. They conduct court visits, present continuing education programs, develop policies, procedures and forms and collaborate with state agencies on legislation and policy matters.

- PCA publishes the Probate Court Rules of Procedure, which guides the practice of law in the courts. The book is updated biennially, with input from the Rules Advisory Committee and the Probate Assembly. The 2015 edition of the rules contains revisions to 20 sections, including numerous streamlined procedures and other changes necessitated by amendments to the statutes.

- New legislation also requires that court forms be updated to ensure compliance with statutory requirements for probate procedures. The Probate Assembly's Procedures Review Committee and PCA staff revised or created more than 100 forms during the past two years. The committee also revised numerous forms to simplify language and provide clearer instructions that make it easier for court users to complete paperwork. The addition of QR codes to forms provides twofold benefits: Users can scan codes with a smartphone to link to relevant information on the website, and the court case management software reads the codes to automate the process of logging in forms.

- As is customary in an election year, education took center stage in fall 2014 after voters elected nine new judges to the Probate Courts. The law department conducted 40 hours of training for the new judges, in addition to the array of educational programs the department presents each year with the Probate Assembly.

- State law requires the Probate Court Administrator or his designee to visit each Probate Court every two years to review court performance. In 2014, the law department introduced an educational component to these visits, with attorneys leading 26 interactive workshops with court staff to strengthen their knowledge of new court procedures.

“The Regional Children’s Probate Courts ultimately help to preserve families. The courts give children, parents and potential guardians the opportunity to work together to come up with a plan to best serve the child and the family, and to provide the judge with the detailed information he or she needs to make a decision that is in the best interest of the child.”

—Attorney Johanna Fazzone, *The Law Office of Johanna P. Fazzone, Cheshire*





Leadership: Judges and Clerks

CONTINUING EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Judge Cynthia C. Becker, Chair

The Continuing Education Committee develops educational programs in cooperation with PCA on matters of probate law and related topics. The committee presents quarterly educational seminars in conjunction with Probate Assembly meetings.

ETHICS COMMITTEE

Judge Michael F. Magistrali, Chair

The Ethics Committee is responsible for periodic review of the Code of Probate Judicial Conduct. The committee also conducts educational programs for judges on ethics. In 2015, the committee finished work on a proposed new Code of Probate Judicial Conduct in what was the first major rewrite of the document since 1991. The committee spent more than two years working to align the new code with the Code of Judicial Conduct for the Superior, Appellate and Supreme Courts and incorporate statutory changes and changes stemming from revisions to the Probate Court Rules of Procedure.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee guides the work of the Probate Assembly. Committee membership comprises the current assembly officers, the immediate past president, the chairs of the standing committees and nine voting members elected on a rotating basis (three per year) with representation from each county.

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

Judge Brian T. Mahon, Chair

The Legislative Committee develops and reviews legislative proposals that affect the Probate Courts. In 2014 and 2015, the committee worked closely with PCA to update several statutes, including many that strengthen protections and court accessibility for vulnerable populations. Budget matters were a major focus of the 2015 session as the Probate Courts sought to impress upon state leaders the fairness of maintaining general fund support for the courts.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Judge Joseph A. Egan, Jr., Chair

The Nominating Committee prepares the slate of candidates for Probate Assembly offices and the slate of members for the

executive committee, budget committee and Council on Probate Judicial Conduct. Elections are conducted at the Probate Assembly's annual meeting in April.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Judge Michael R. Brandt, Chair

The Planning Committee absorbed the ad hoc Bylaws Committee and revised the bylaws of the Probate Assembly to conform them to the requirements stemming from Probate Court restructuring. In 2015, the Probate Assembly amended the bylaws to confirm the assembly's organizational status as a state entity. Other changes to the bylaws included reducing the quorum needed from 50 percent of members to 40 percent; ending term limits for committee chairs and members; and identifying the quarter, instead of the month, in which quarterly assembly meetings are held.

PROCEDURES REVIEW COMMITTEE

Judge Philip A. Wright, Jr., Chair

The Procedures Review Committee works with PCA to develop and revise court forms to ensure compliance with legal requirements. The committee reviews new legislation and responds to suggestions from judges, court personnel and court users. By June 30, 2015, the committee had revised 84 forms and created 69 new ones. Legislation that required form changes in 2014 included Public Act 14-104, which clarified the legal relationship between a biological parent and a child who is adopted as an adult by another person. Another provision established jurisdiction to permit a Probate Court to make findings of fact related to a child's eligibility for special immigrant status under federal law in connection with a removal or termination proceeding. In 2015, Public Act 15-5 (June Special Session) created a lien for unpaid probate fees on any real property located in the state that is included in the basis for fees in decedents' estates, necessitating several forms related to releasing this lien.

PUBLIC INFORMATION COMMITTEE

Judge O. James Purnell, III, Chair

The Public Information Committee works to enhance understanding of the Probate Courts. The committee also works with PCA to prepare press releases and inform citizens about the services the Probate Courts provide.



“The probate process was so easy. Our Probate Court officer prepared me for everything. During the guardianship proceeding, everything went so smoothly. It was a pleasure. Since then, there has been a lot of ongoing support.”
 —Andrea Scott-Boyd, legal guardian of Da’Sani Scott, 6, New Haven

Honoring Supporters

The Probate Assembly and PCA recognize supporters of the Probate Courts with the Public Service Award. The 2014 recipient was Attorney Matthew F. LaRock, former assistant legal director of the Department of Children and Families, and the 2015 recipient was Senior Assistant State’s Attorney Howard S. Stein of the Judicial District of Fairfield in Bridgeport. The Probate Assembly’s Glenn E. Knierim Pro Bono Award, which recognizes advocacy on behalf of children and families in probate matters, was awarded to Old Saybrook Attorney Kerry E. Knobelsdorff in 2014 and West Hartford Attorney Michael J. Croll in 2015.

AD HOC CONSERVATOR GUIDELINES COMMITTEE

Judge Mark J. DeGennaro, Chair

The Conservator Guidelines Committee convened in 2015 to review compensation for conservators appointed on behalf of indigent conserved individuals. The committee is identifying duties that are compensable and setting guidelines for payment. Payment of conservatorship services for indigent individuals is one of the fastest-growing items in the Probate Courts’ budget. It accounted for a 108 percent increase in costs from 2011 to 2015.

AD HOC COURT SECURITY COMMITTEE

Judge Anthony J. DePanfilis, Chair

The Court Security Committee began meeting in 2013 to strengthen safety and security at the courts. The committee established court security and emergency preparedness policies that were incorporated into the PCA Policy Manual during the biennium. At the committee’s recommendation, all court employees participated in regional training programs to learn ways of handling a possible active shooter situation in the workplace.

AD HOC JUDICIAL SELECTION COMMITTEE

Judge Sydney W. Elkin, Chair

The Judicial Selection Committee convened in 2015 to study the issues surrounding various methods of selecting probate judges including through elections, as is currently done in Connecticut, and appointment. The committee functions mainly in a research capacity.

CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF PROBATE CLERKS (CAPC)

The Connecticut Association of Probate Clerks (CAPC), a professional group founded in 1983, has a membership of 240 clerks and judges. As stated in its bylaws, the group seeks to “promote the interests of all clerks and assistant clerks of the Probate Courts throughout the state by the exchange of ideas and information.” The association holds quarterly meetings, which usually have an educational component. The president is Chief Clerk Patricia Saviano of the Danbury Probate Court.



Legislative Summary

Connecticut's method of funding the Probate Courts changed dramatically during the 2015 legislative session, which observers described as one of the toughest in memory as state leaders grappled with rising deficit projections. The state budget cut general fund support for the Probate Courts to zero for fiscal years 2016 and 2017, creating a \$32 million shortfall. To help make up the difference, state leaders increased probate fees steeply, particularly in the area of decedents' estates. For estates larger than \$2 million, the fee rose from 0.25 percent to 0.5 percent, and the \$12,500 cap was eliminated. These changes took effect retroactively, based on date of death on or after January 1, 2015. The impact of the funding changes on the Probate Courts will not be fully evident until the next reporting cycle.

The 2015 budget cut followed two years of budget increases, reflecting recognition by lawmakers that the Probate Courts are responsible fiscal stewards but face increasing costs. The biggest areas of increase were in payments for the services of conservators and attorneys appointed to assist indigent court users and implementing a uniform, equitable pay plan for court staff. Of the \$2.9 million increase in funding from fiscal year 2013 to 2014, \$2 million represented the transfer of funding for the Kinship Fund and the Grandparents and Relatives Respite Fund from the Department of Social Services to the Probate Courts.

On non-budget matters, the most significant acts passed in 2014 and 2015 underscored the Probate Courts' role in safeguarding the rights of vulnerable populations and are summarized below. A complete description of legislation affecting the Probate Courts can be found at ctprobate.gov.

2014

Public Act 14-103, An Act Concerning Probate Court Operations, makes several technical and administrative changes to Probate Court statutes, including the following:

- Requires annual reviews of psychiatric commitments to be conducted in the court where the hospital is located.
- Updates the process for reporting mental health adjudications to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS).
- Eases the transition to appointing a successor conservator when a conservator resigns, dies or is removed.
- Permits the transfer of a conservatorship matter to another court only if the transfer is the conserved person's preference.

Probate Courts Indigent Costs		
Costs and Number of Matters	FY 14	FY 15
Conservator Payments	\$3.4 million	\$4.5 million
Conserved Persons	3,270	3,886
Attorney Payments	\$2.3 million	\$2.7 million
Cases	9,943	11,276
Waived Fees	\$1.24 million	\$1.3 million
Cases	5,951	6,392



- Permits the New Haven Regional Children’s Probate Court to establish a truancy clinic.

Public Act 14-104, An Act Concerning Probate Courts, establishes jurisdiction to permit a Probate Court to make findings of fact related to a child’s eligibility for special immigrant status under federal law. The act also:

- Clarifies that a biological parent who joins in an adult adoption with another person does not lose his or her parental rights.
- Amends paternity statutes relating to inheritance rights after death of the father and child.

2015

Public Act 15-217, An Act Concerning Probate Court Operations, makes several changes to Probate Court statutes, including the following:

- Permits a non-relative adult with physical custody of a minor to petition for removal of the parents.
- Clarifies how notice is given in matters involving guardianship of persons with intellectual disability.
- Permits a district where a petitioner is currently located, in addition to the district where the petitioner resides, to hear a petition for voluntary conservatorship.
- Establishes a procedure in the Probate Court to name a successor trustee when the trust instrument fails to indicate who will become trustee if the current trustee resigns, dies or becomes incapable of serving.

“The Waterbury Regional Children’s Probate Court is instrumental in providing the necessary supports to children and families. The Probate Court officers give the judge insight, clarification and an understanding of the family dynamics so he can issue the most appropriate order. The relationships are marked by mutual respect and the ability to communicate openly, and creative ideas are often proposed to resolve difficult family situations.”

— *Juanita Soriano-Taylor, social worker, Department of Children and Families*

Brings probate magistrates, attorney probate referees and judicial candidates under the jurisdiction of the Council on Probate Judicial Conduct and gives the Chief Justice the authority to suspend or remove a probate magistrate or attorney probate referee.

Public Act 15-132, An Act Concerning Birth Certificate Amendments, amends the grounds on which a Probate Court may issue an order to another state to change the sex designation on a person’s birth certificate to include non-surgical means of gender transition.

Public Act 15-199, An Act Expanding Guardianship Opportunities for Children and Implementing Provisions of the Federal Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act, authorizes the Probate Courts to order sibling visitation in adoptions.

Public Act 15-225, An Act Concerning Chronic Absenteeism, allows for the expansion of the Probate Court truancy clinics.

Public Act 15-233, An Act Concerning Protective Services for Suspected Elderly Abuse Victims, allows the commissioner of the Department of Social Services to petition a Probate Court for an order to access the home of an elderly person when protective services personnel believe the person is a victim of abuse, and they have been denied access during their investigation.

Public Act 15-236, An Act Protecting Elderly Consumers from Exploitation, adds the crimes of larceny and abuse to those that prevent a perpetrator from inheriting from a victim.

Public Act 15-240, An Act Concerning Adoption of the Connecticut Uniform Power of Attorney Act, adopts a comprehensive set of new rules, effective in July 2016, regarding powers of attorney.



Continuing Education for Judges and Court Staff

Judges and court staff keep informed about new laws and regulations, best practices in probate law and administration and evolving social mores through ongoing education and training sessions. Continuing education is the foundation for promoting best practices and uniformity in the Probate Courts. It is the basis for resolving disputes fairly and for reinforcing the courts' mission of providing prompt, effective service.

Probate Court regulations require judges to earn at least 15 educational credit hours a year and court staff to earn at least six. Probate Court Administration spearheads an array of forums, some in partnership with the Probate Assembly, to help judges and court staff meet the requirements. Designed to provide the latest information on topics that affect the courts and court users, the forums include quarterly Probate Assembly seminars, semi-annual judges institutes, annual court staff training sessions and chief clerks meetings, and periodic webinars and roundtable discussions. Topics address the full range of matters the courts handle. Training sessions are also dedicated to issues related to court operations, including technological advancements, personnel policies and security and safety.

In 2014, PCA added an educational component to the visits staff attorneys are required to make to each court on a biennial basis to review legal practices. During the visits, PCA attorneys conduct a workshop for judges and court staff on relevant topics conferring up to 1.75 hours of continuing legal credit. In 2014, the attorneys led 25 workshops that conferred a total of 38.25 credits.

Judges and court staff also fulfill some continuing education requirements through courses offered by approved organizations. The Connecticut Bar Association provides vouchers that permit judges and court staff to attend programs relevant to probate law and procedure for free. Judges may earn credits by attending educational programs offered at semi-annual conferences of the National College of Probate Judges. Clerks may earn credits by participating in the educational component of quarterly meetings of the Connecticut Association of Probate Clerks.

Newly elected judges face additional requirements that include completion of an intensive curriculum designed by the Office of the Probate Court Administrator. Following elections in November 2014, nine newly elected judges each completed the required 40 hours of coursework and eight hours of mentoring.

EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

2013

September-October Required Training

Topic and speaker

Sexual harassment awareness: Atty. Nathaniel Brown, Law Office of Nathaniel G. Brown

SEPTEMBER

Probate Assembly Seminar

Topics and speakers

Trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy: Dr. Jason Lang, Child Health & Development Institute of Connecticut, and Dr. Lesley Siegel and Marilyn Cloud, Department of Children and Families

Autism spectrum disorders: Rebecca Giammatti, independent board-certified behavior analyst

New Probate Court rules and forms: Judge Diane Blick and PCA personnel

Roundtable Discussions

Topics and speakers

Probate Court rules of procedure and civil commitments, court forms and CMS applications: PCA personnel

Court Staff Training

Topics and speakers

Superior Court service centers: Krista Hess, Priscilla Arroyo and Lori Semrau, Judicial Branch Rules of procedure, new legislation and IT advancements: PCA Personnel

OCTOBER

Judges Institute

Topics and speakers

Elder law: Atty. Lisa Nachmias Davis of Davis O'Sullivan & Priest LLC, Atty. Mark Dost of Tinley, Nastro, Renehan & Dost, LLP, Atty. Sharon Pope of Law Offices of Sharon L. Pope, LLC and Atty.

Suzanne Brown Walsh of Cummings & Lockwood, LLC

Rules of procedure and new legislation: PCA attorneys

NOVEMBER

Probate Assembly Seminar
Topics and speakers
Overview of mental illness: Dr. Alec Buchanan, Yale University Medical School
Treatment of mental illness: Dr. Patricia Kelly, Connecticut Valley Hospital
Mental health services: Loel Meckel, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and Atty. Michael Mackniak, Guardian Ad Litem Services, Inc.

2014

JANUARY

Probate Assembly Seminar
Topics and speakers
Campaign finance: Atty. Kevin Ahern and Atty. Joshua Foley, Connecticut Elections Enforcement Commission
Campaign ethics: Judge Matthew Jalowiec, Judge Michael Magistrali, Judge John McGrath, Jr., retired Judge Thomas Sutnik and PCA Atty. Thomas Gaffey
Voting competency: Judge Daniel Caruso
Understanding gender expression and identity: Robin McHaelen, True Colors, Inc.
Name-change petitions: Judge Joseph Egan, Jr.

MARCH

Judges Institute
Topics and speakers
Examination of witnesses and hearsay: Atty. Vanessa Roberts Avery of McCarter & English, LLP
Recent probate cases: Atty. Jeffrey Cooper, Quinnipiac University Law School, and Atty. John Ivimey of Reid and Riege, PC
Rules of procedure: Judge John McGrath, Jr., and Judge Claire Twerdy
Ex parte communications: Judge Philip Wright, Jr.

Chief Clerks Training
Topics and speakers
Customer service, best practices: Annie Linden, ESI Employee Assistance Group
LGBTB youth in the Probate Courts: Robin McHaelen, True Colors, Inc.
Rules of procedure: Judge Philip Wright, Jr., and PCA Atty. Thomas Gaffey
PCA Policy Manual revisions, court procedures, Laserfiche integration and Americans with Disabilities Act: PCA personnel

JUNE

Roundtable Discussions
Topics and speaker
Ex parte communications, billing for estates, guardianships of estates of minors, logging court matters: PCA Atty. Bonnie Bennet

Probate Assembly Seminar
Topics and speakers
Victim advocacy issues: Atty. Garvin Ambrose, Connecticut Office of the Victim Advocate
Firearms issues and resources: Lt. Eric Cooke and Atty. Christine Plourde, Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection
Active shooter awareness: Charles Epstein and Melanie Kerr, Judicial Branch
Decedents' estates: Atty. Rachel Withington of Cummings & Lockwood, LLC, Judge Michael Brandt, Judge Terrence Lomme and PCA Atty. Bonnie Bennet

SEPTEMBER

Probate Assembly Seminar
Topics and speakers
Special immigrant juvenile status: Atty. Edwin Colon and Atty. Stacey Violante Cote, Center for Children's Advocacy, and Atty. Megan Naughton of Robinson and Cole, LLP
Indian Child Welfare Act: Superior Court Judge Barbara Quinn
Notice to active-duty military: retired Judge Edward McAnaney
Paternity matters: PCA Atty. Thomas Gaffey
Internal compensation study: Fred Owen, Owen-Pottier, Inc.

Special Training
Topic and speaker
Americans with Disabilities Act: Sandra Lugo Gines and David Irace, Judicial Branch, and Vincent Russo, PCA

OCTOBER

Chief Clerks Training
Topics and speakers
Customer service: Chief clerks Jackie Buckle, Alexis Lewis, Loreen Michalak and Maureen O'Connor
New legislation and forms and observations from court visits: PCA attorneys

Webinar for Judges and Court Staff
Topics and speakers
New forms and procedures and CMS billing: PCA personnel

Judges Institute
Topics and speakers
Detecting deception in the courtroom: Maria Hartwig, John Jay College of Criminal Justice
Advance directives: Judge Charles Norris
New legislation and Ebola preparedness: PCA attorneys

NOVEMBER

Probate Assembly Seminar
Topics and speakers
Property law: Atty. Ellen Sostman, Connecticut Attorneys Title Insurance Company
Alzheimer's disease and dementia: Dr. Harry Morgan, Jr., Center for

Geriatric and Family Psychiatry, Inc.
Title, real and personal property: Judge Edward Burt, Jr.
Conservatorship law: Judge Robert Killian, Jr., and Chief Clerk Mary Ann Champney

Regional Training Programs (4)
Topic and speakers
Active shooter awareness: Melanie Kerr and Jeffrey Getz, Judicial Branch, and Vincent Russo, PCA

**2015
JANUARY**

Probate Assembly Seminar
Topics and speakers
Americans with Disabilities Act: Sandra Lugo Gines and Daniel Irace, Judicial Branch
Intellectual disability: Atty. Peter Hughes, Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities, Atty. M.J. McCarthy and Dr. Peter Tolisano, Jr., Department of Developmental Services, Chris McNaboe and Steven Schneidermeyer, Horizons Programs, Inc.
Code of Probate Judicial Conduct: Atty. Richard Banbury, retired Judge Elaine Camposeo, Judge Walter Clebowicz, Judge Andre Dorval, Judge Matthew Jalowiec and Judge Michael Magistrali

Regional Training Programs (2)
Topic and speakers
Active shooter awareness: Melanie Kerr and Jeffrey Getz, Judicial Branch, and Vincent Russo, PCA

MARCH

Judges Institute
Topics and speakers
Unaccompanied minors and human trafficking: Atty. Alicia

Kinsman, International Institute of Connecticut, and William Rivera, Department of Children and Families
Case law review: Atty. Jeffrey Cooper, Quinnipiac University School of Law, and Atty. John Ivimey of Reid and Riege, P.C.
Opinion writing and evidence in children's matters: Judge Francis Foley, III, Superior Court, and Judge John McGrath, Jr., and Judge Leah Schad
Legal research: Judge James Purnell, III
Special immigrant juvenile status: Judge Dianne Yamin

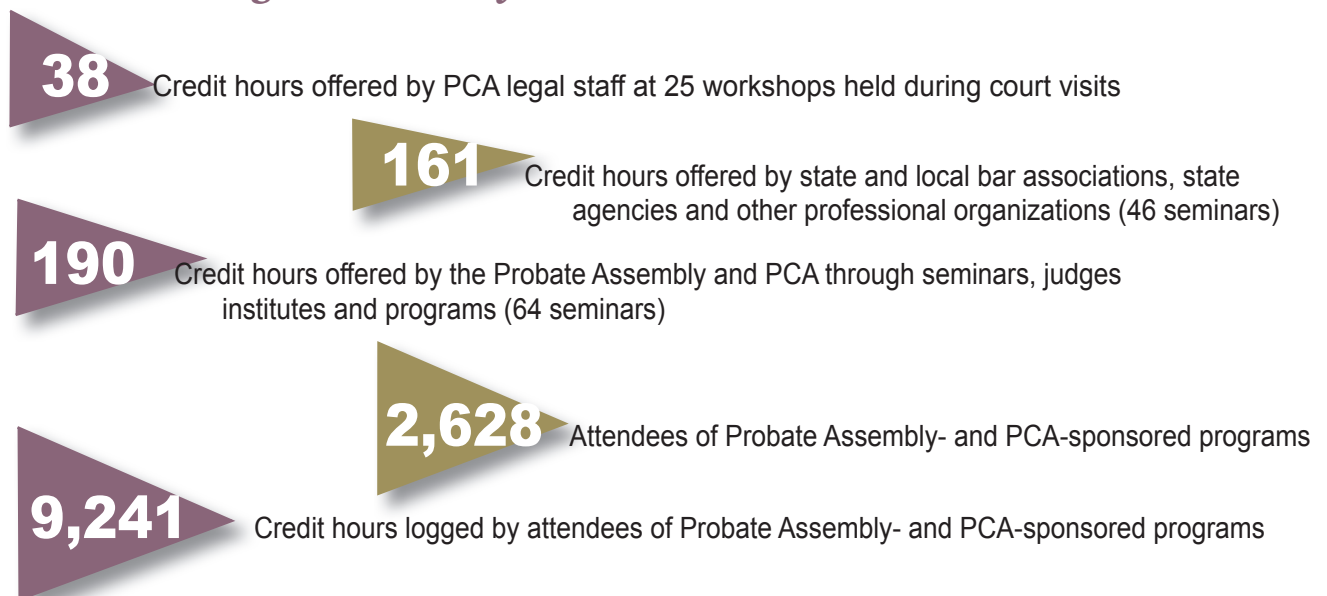
Chief Clerks Meeting
Topics and speakers
Workplace safety: Cathy Zinsser, Department of Labor, and PCA Atty. Bonnie Bennet
CMS-Laserfiche integration: Chief Clerk Eileen Robbins and PCA personnel
Personnel policies and records retention: PCA personnel

JUNE

Roundtable Discussions
Topics and speaker
Rules of procedure, conservatorships, special immigrant juvenile status and unclaimed property: PCA Atty. Bonnie Bennet

Probate Assembly Seminar
Topics and speakers
Trusts: Jillian Comolli, PLAN of CT, Inc., Atty. James Funnell, Jr., of Hermenze & Marcantonio LLC, Atty. Amy Orlando of Law Offices of Amy E. Orlando, LLC, Atty. Robert Fawber of Cummings & Lockwood, LLC, Judge Frank Forgione, Judge William Osterndorf and Chief Clerk Alice Ann Fitzpatrick
Rules of procedure: Atty. Greta Solomon of Cohen and Wolf, PC, and Judge Michael Darby

Continuing Education By the Numbers

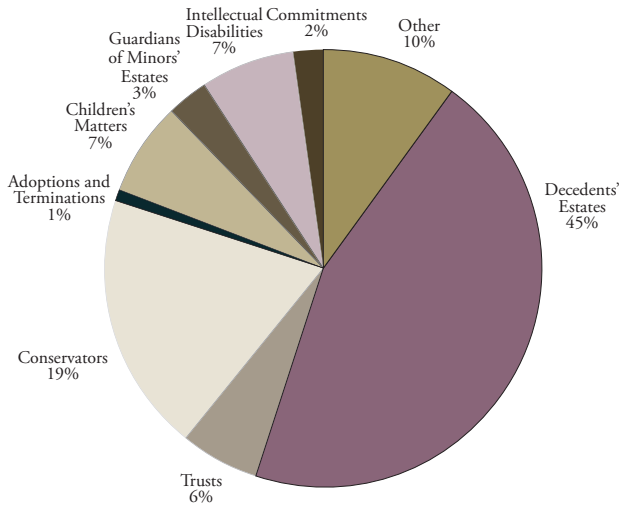


Probate Court Matters

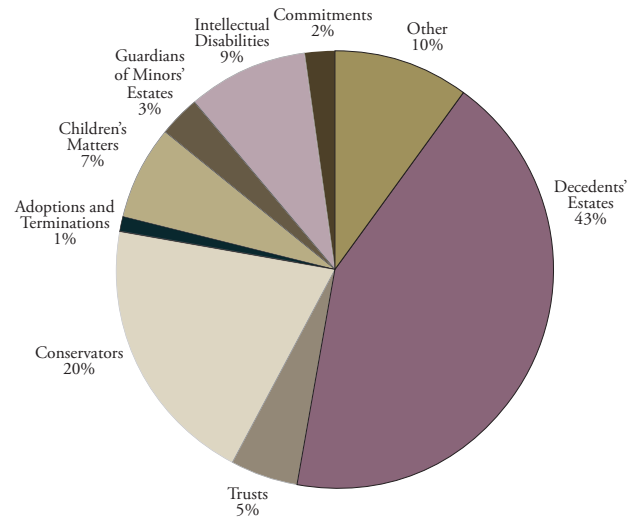
CASE TYPE	FY14	FY15
DECEDENTS' ESTATES:		
4a-16 Petition	3,106	2,837
Administration – Intestate	2,113	2,108
Admit Will	7,728	7,826
Advice/Approval of Action by Fiduciary	481	647
Affidavit Estate	6,129	6,025
Allowance for Spouse or Family	65	67
Allowance of Account	9,154	9,025
Compromise of Claim	662	567
Custody of Remains	407	465
Hearing Management/Status Conferences	1,812	1,735
Insolvent Estate	449	462
Sale or Mortgage of Real Estate	1,375	1,308
TPO Estate	3,366	3,594
Will Contest	46	51
Decedent, Other	3,716	4,406
TRUSTS:		
Advice/Approval of Action by Fiduciary	70	154
Trust Accounts	3,123	3,028
Appointment of Testamentary Trustee	475	449
Compel Account for Intervivos Trust	15	11
Hearing Management/Status Conferences	215	179
Termination of Charitable Trust	14	7
Trust, Other	1,014	1,092
CONSERVATORS:		
Advice/Approval of Action by Fiduciary	444	502
Allowance of Account	2,671	3,274
Appointment of Conservator of Person and Estate – Involuntary	1,744	1,798
Appointment of Conservator of Person and Estate – Voluntary	545	622
Appointment of Conservator of the Estate – Involuntary	161	231
Appointment of Conservator of the Estate – Voluntary	380	391
Appointment of Conservator of the Person – Involuntary	337	265
Appointment of Conservator of the Person – Voluntary	81	120
Appointment of Temporary Conservator	334	298
Authority to Consent to Psychiatric Medication Treatment 17a-543(e)	406	334
Hearing Management/Status Conferences	933	993
Orders Concerning Life Support Systems	12	16
Mortgage or Sale of Real Estate	335	334
Conservatorship Reviews	1,631	1,621
Conservatorship, Other	7,333	7,701
ADOPTIONS AND TERMINATIONS:		
Advice/Approval of Action by Fiduciary	0	2
Approval of Adoption – Co-Parent/Stepparent	215	173
Approval of Adoption – Relative	39	38
Approval of Adoption – Statutory Parent (DCF Identified)	3	4
Approval of Adoption – Statutory Parent (DCF Non-Identified)	3	6
Approval of Adoption – Statutory Parent (Private Agency Identified)	26	15
Approval of Adoption – Statutory Parent (Private Agency Non-Identified)	29	32
Approval of Adult Adoption	86	79
Hearing Management Conference	30	34
Termination of Parental Rights	443	433
Transfer to Superior Court	3	7
Adoption/TPR, Other	258	211

CASE TYPE	FY14	FY15
CHILDREN'S MATTERS:		
Advice/Approval of Action by Fiduciary	1	5
Appointment of Co-Guardian of a Minor	65	69
DCF Initial Permanency Hearing	99	88
DCF Subsequent Permanency Hearing	75	39
Emancipation of Minor	20	11
Hearing Management/Status Conference	167	149
Immediate Temporary Custody	194	143
Paternity Claim	66	63
Reinstatement of Parent as Guardian	267	164
Removal of Guardian of the Person	650	796
Temporary Custody	832	840
Temporary Guardian	840	759
Transfer to Superior Court	8	9
Children's Matters, Other	3,140	3,817
GUARDIANS OF ESTATES:		
Advice/Approval of Action by Fiduciary	53	58
Allowance of Account	859	1,009
Appointment of Guardian of the Estate	625	658
Compromise of Claim	398	404
Hearing Management/Status Conferences	93	141
Guardian of Estate, Other	658	703
PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY:		
Advice/Approval of Action by Fiduciary	26	26
Appointment of Guardian of a Person with Intellectual Disabilities	637	675
Hearing Management/Status Conference	138	177
Placement of a Person with Intellectual Disabilities	20	28
Sterilization	3	1
Temporary Limited Guardian of a Person with Intellectual Disabilities	5	4
Three-year Reviews	1,637	2,205
Guardian of Person with Intellectual Disability, Other	3,796	5,078
COMMITMENTS – ADULT:		
Commitments – Adult		
Annual Review	98	110
Biennial Review Hearing	0	0
Commitment – Alcohol & Drug Dependency	16	38
Commitment of Adult – Involuntary	1,069	986
Hearing Management/Status Conference	11	42
Permission for Shock Therapy	181	159
Probable Cause Hearing – Adult Commitment	617	609
Release from Confinement	6	3
Warrant for Examination by Court	7	3
Adult Commitment, Other	3	11
COMMITMENTS – CHILDREN (UNDER 16):		
Commitment of Child – Involuntary	10	3
Child Commitment, Other	1	1
OTHER MATTERS:		
Change of Name Petitions	2,480	2,568
Compel Power of Attorney Accounting	13	20
Compel UTMA Accounting	0	0
Hearing Management/Status Conference	3	7
Marriage: Request for Permission (Minors)	0	0
Restore Right to Purchase, Possess or Transport a Firearm	0	0
Other Petitions or Motions	42	98
Fee Waivers	5,951	6,392
Passports	2,609	2,299
Totals (excluding Passports)	89,897	94,746

Probate Court Matters FY 14



Probate Court Matters FY 15



Probate Court Administration Fund Activity

	FY13-14	FY14-15
FUND BALANCE – Beginning of Year	6,862,908	6,391,181
REVENUE:		
Probate Court Fees	31,089,117	31,304,026
General Fund Appropriation	7,300,000	8,200,000
Pass-Through Funding:	2,200,000	2,200,000
Interest	201,525	211,129
Investment Income	12,974	14,132
Probate Court Miscellaneous Funds	24,674	1,133
TOTAL REVENUE	40,828,290	41,930,420
EXPENSES:		
<u>PCA Expenses</u>		
Personnel Expenses:		
Salaries and Wages	1,519,109	1,575,167
Fringe Benefits	1,180,931	1,122,420
Other Expenses:		
Computer Equipment and Services	438,899	286,535
Professional Services	74,534	93,613
Building Repairs, Maintenance and Utilities	163,064	52,225
Office Expenses	47,933	47,933
Training and Education – Judges, Clerks, PCA Staff	30,395	36,099
Dues and Subscriptions	12,257	10,950
Other	25,489	14,492

	FY13-14	FY14-15
<u>Court Expenses</u>		
Personnel Expenses:		
Salaries and Wages	18,608,946	19,565,907
Fringe Benefits	5,242,701	5,679,434
Retirement Plan Funding	1,477,335	1,370,866
Work in Process Payments	74,246	0
Retirement Administration	150,381	202,623
Other Expenses:		
Computer Equipment and Services	626,111	819,005
Court Office Expenses	700,941	497,585
Council on Probate Judicial Conduct	54,040	101,089
Outside Services	82,442	92,988
Mileage, Parking and Tolls Reimbursement	59,421	68,750
Rental of Records Storage Space	52,542	36,613
Other	35,085	35,856
Indigency Expenses:		
Conservators	3,375,210	4,409,717
Court-Appointed Counsel	2,324,982	2,678,139
Marshals/Ads/Newspapers	88,581	100,751
Pass-Through Funding:		
Kinship and Respite Care Program	2,050,000	2,050,000
Melissa's Project	156,856	156,856
Guardianship Pilot	100,000	100,000
Children in Placement	50,000	50,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	38,715,211	41,260,184
Transfer to General Fund	(2,584,806)	–
FUND BALANCE – JUNE 30	6,391,181	7,061,417

Probate Judges and Employees Retirement Fund

	FY13-14	FY14-15
Benefits paid to retired judges and employees	4,724,403	5,019,178
Refunds (upon death or termination)	17,396	16,726
Interest paid on refunds	2,343	2,424
Total Expenses	4,744,142	5,038,328

Judicial Directory - 2015

PROBATE JUDGE	DISTRICT	PROBATE JUDGE	DISTRICT
Ahlberg, Kurt M. (since 1/7/15)	Stratford	Landgrebe, Martin F.	Housatonic
Alter, Peter Jay (through 1/6/15)	Glastonbury-Hebron	Lassman Fisher, Marianne	Greater Windsor
Anthony, Fred J.	Shelton	Lomme, Terrance D.	Saybrook
Barrett, Peter C. (since 1/7/15)	Madison-Guilford	Magistrali, Michael F.	Torrington Area
Becker, Cynthia C.	Simsbury Regional	Mahon, Brian T.	Meriden
Berkenstock, Jennifer L.	Region # 14	Mariano, Peter E.	Naugatuck
Blick, Diane S.	Litchfield Hills	Marino, Joseph D.	Middletown
Brandt, Michael R.	East Haven-North Haven	McGrath, John J., Jr.	Windham-Colchester
Brunnock, Thomas P.	Waterbury	McNamara, Jeffrey A.	Niantic Regional
	Waterbury Regional Children's Probate Court*		New London Regional Children's Probate Court*
Burt, Edward C., Jr.	Hamden-Bethany	Murray, Michael P. (through 1/6/15)	Darien-New Canaan
Calabrese, Domenick N.	Region # 22	Norris, Charles K.	Norwich
Caruso, Daniel F.	Fairfield	Osterndorf, William P. (since 1/7/15)	Darien-New Canaan
Chadwick, Scott R. (since 11/19/14)	East Hartford	Peoples, Sean M. (since 1/7/15)	Glastonbury-Hebron
Clebowicz, Walter A.	Berlin	Purnell, O. James, III	Ellington
Daly, Evelyn M.	Farmington-Burlington	Randich, Robert A.	Newington
Darby, Michael M.	Greater Manchester	Riordan, Barbara Gardner (since 11/17/14)	Tolland-Mansfield
DeGennaro, Mark J.	West Haven	Rowe, T. R.	Trumbull
DePanfilis, Anthony J.	Norwalk-Wilton	Schad, Leah P.	Northeast
Dorval, Andre D.	Region # 19		Northeast Regional Children's Probate Court*
Driscoll, Allan T. (through 12/31/13)	East Hartford	Smith, Foye A. (since 11/10/2015)	Hartford
Egan, Joseph A., Jr.	Northern Fairfield County	Streit-Kefalas, Beverly K.	Milford-Orange
Elkin, Sydney W.	West Hartford	Truppa, Andrea L. (since 1/7/15)	Plainfield-Killingly Regional
Forgione, Frank J.	Branford-North Branford	Twerdy, Claire C. (through 6/30/14)	Tolland-Mansfield
Fox, Gerald M., Jr. (through 6/20/14)	Stamford	Wexler, Lisa K.	Westport
Fox, Gerald M., III (since 1/7/15)	Stamford	Wright, Philip A., Jr.	Wallingford
Ganim, Paul J.	Bridgeport		Central Connecticut Regional Children's Probate Court*
Greene, Mathew H.	New London	Yamin, Dianne E.	Danbury
Griffiths, David A. (through 1/6/15)	Plainfield-Killingly Regional	Zelman, Steven M.	Tobacco Valley
Helander, Joel E. (through 1/6/15)	Madison-Guilford		Hartford Regional Children's Probate Court*
Hopper, David W.	Greenwich	*Administrative Judge	
Hoyle, Clifford D. (through 12/31/14)	Derby		
Hoyle, Clifford P. (since 1/7/15)	Derby		
Jalowiec, Matthew J.	Cheshire-Southington		
Keeney, Timothy R.	North Central CT		
Kepple, Nicholas F.	Southeastern CT Regional		
Keyes, John A.	New Haven		
	New Haven Regional Children's Probate Court*		
Killian, Robert K., Jr. (through 4/10/2015)	Hartford		
Kurmay, F. Paul (through 10/22/14)	Stratford		

Overview of Connecticut's Probate Courts

EVOLUTION OF PROBATE DISTRICTS

Connecticut's Probate Courts have a long history. The first separate forums for the administration of decedents' estates and the appointment of guardians were established in 1698 as offshoots of the county courts. In 1716, these courts were officially established as the Probate Courts, and the state's four counties at the time – Hartford, Fairfield, New Haven and New London – each had one court with one judge.

The first probate districts comprising less than a full county were formed in 1719, due in part to the transportation needs of a growing population. As the years passed, probate districts became progressively smaller and more local in character. This trend continued until 1987, when the legislature established the 133rd probate district. After that time, the trend began to reverse, mainly for economic reasons, and a number of districts consolidated with other districts. In 2009, the General Assembly established a process to further consolidate the Probate Courts, and Public Act 09-1 reduced the number of probate districts from 117 to 54, effective January 5, 2011.

PROBATE COURT JURISDICTION

The Probate Courts derive their jurisdiction and authority from the state legislature. Originally, the courts only administered decedents' estates and guardianships. Today, the courts handle a variety of matters that affect Connecticut's citizens

from birth to death. These matters include:

- Decedents' estates
- Trusts
- Conservatorships
- Guardianships of persons with intellectual disability
- Guardianships of minors
- Removal of parents as guardians and termination of parental rights
- Adoptions
- Paternity
- Emancipation of minors
- Commitments of persons with psychiatric disabilities
- Commitments for treatment of drug and alcohol dependence and treatment of tuberculosis
- Name changes

PROBATE JUDGES AND CLERKS

The state constitution requires that probate judges be elected, and the term of office is four years. The mandatory retirement age for judges is 70. Since 2011, any new candidate for the office of probate judge must be an attorney. Probate clerks manage court files and help the public with general questions about court procedures.

The Code of Probate Judicial Conduct establishes ethical standards for judges, and the Council on Probate Judicial Conduct hears complaints alleging judicial misconduct.

Office of the Probate Court Administrator

Paul J. Knierim, Probate Court Administrator

Nicole A. Book
Help Desk Analyst

Amy L. Benjamin
Chief Clerk for Children's Matters

Helen B. Bennet
Attorney

Alison J. Blair
Administrative Clerk II

Alyce E. Cariseo
Manager of Human Resources and Senior
Financial Analyst

Susan A. Dornfried
Executive Assistant

Heather L. Dostaler
Attorney

George Fernandes
Manager of Information Technology

Colleen M. Fitzpatrick
Communications Assistant

Willette Y. Frank
Administrative Clerk II

Thomas E. Gaffey
Chief Counsel

Paula M. Gilroy
Administrative Clerk II

Alison J. Green
Staff Assistant

Stephanie A. Janes
Program Manager for Mental Health and
Family Programs

Andrea M. King
Director of Financial Services

S. Jane Obert
Administrative Services Coordinator I

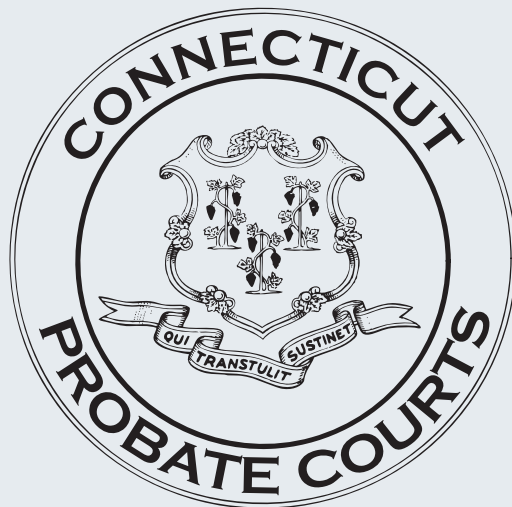
Steven M. Rizza
Platform Analyst I

Vincent J. Russo
Manager of Communications and
Intergovernmental Relations

Silia R. Sahacic
Accountant I

Susan T. Scotti
Platform Analyst I

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Fiscal Administration Coordinator



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