

### 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

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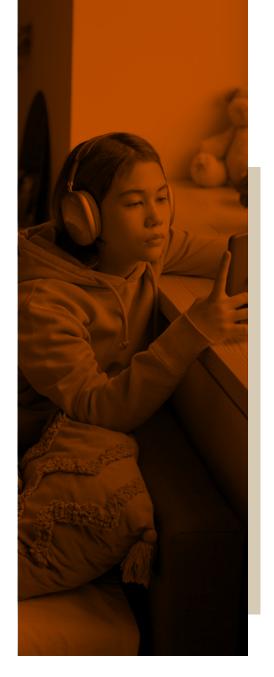


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# Juvenile Court?

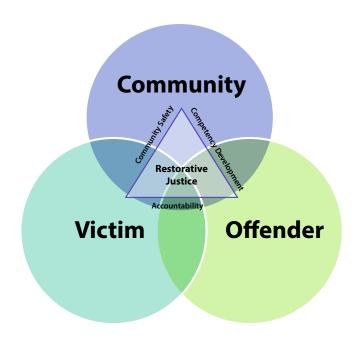
Established in 1911 on the founding principle of rehabilitation, North Dakota's juvenile courts are a division of the District Courts and serve many vital purposes. The Court has jurisdiction over youth ages 10 to 18 referred to it on a report of delinquent behavior. The juvenile court also has jurisdiction over cases involving a Child in Need of Protection (formerly a deprived child) and cases regarding guardianship of a minor child.



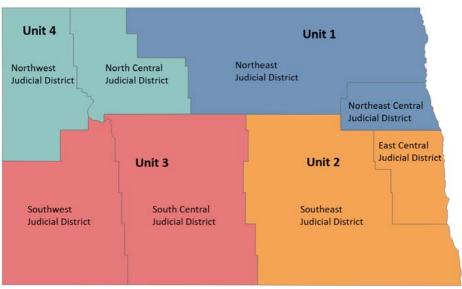
## **Mission Statement**

The Juvenile Court protects the best interests of children and addresses the unique characteristics and needs of children that come before the court as a child in need of protection, and in juvenile delinquency matters. Following the principles of Balanced and Restorative Justice, the mission of the North Dakota Juvenile Court is to promote public safety, hold juvenile offenders accountable, and increase the capacity of juveniles to contribute productively to their community. The courts empower victims, encourage community participation, and support parental responsibility.

REPAIRING HARM,
REDUCING RISK
AND CREATING
OPPORTUNITIES

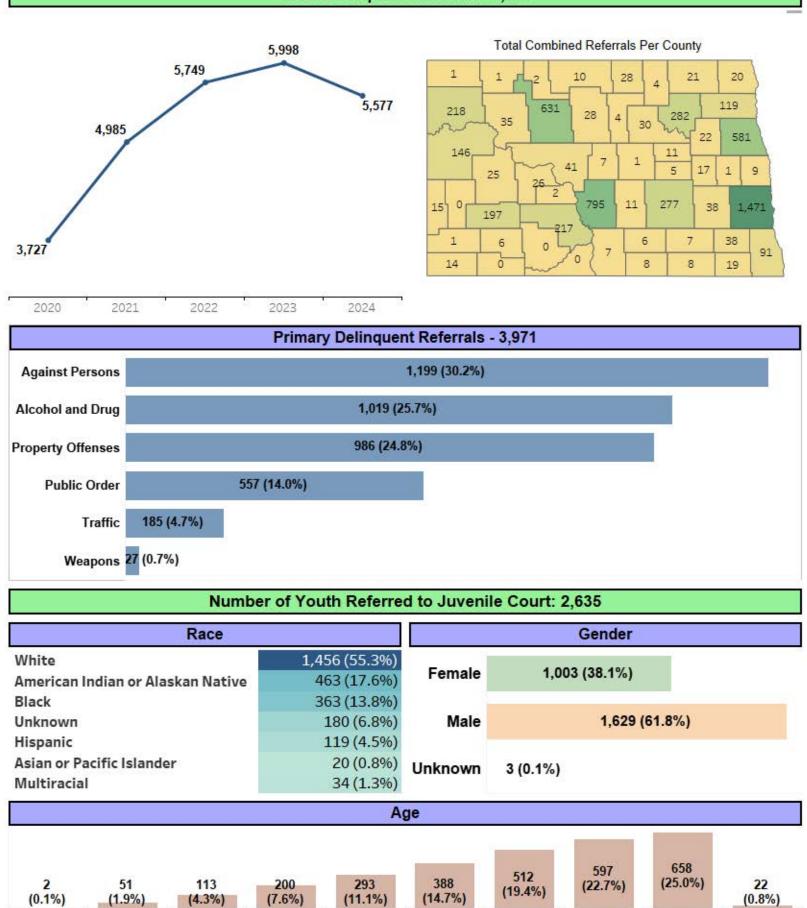






#### North Dakota Juvenile Court 2024 Delinquent Referrals Received

#### Total Delinquent Referrals- 5,577



15

16

17

18+

Unknown

12

<sup>\* 10</sup> and 18 year old group include those referrals of youth under 10 and over 18 that were referred to juvenile court

## 2024 Delinquent Referrals to Juvenile Court

Referrals to the juvenile court for delinquent offenses are received from law enforcement agencies. A delinquent act is a behavior that would be considered a crime if committed by an adult.

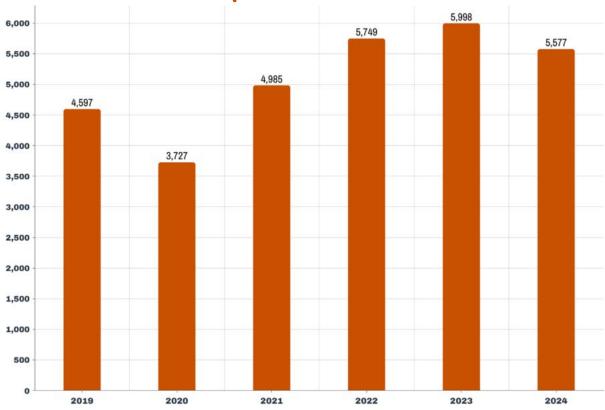
In 2024, total delinquency referrals to the North Dakota Juvenile Courts decreased by 421 (9%).

## **Delinquency Referrals**These were the top five juvenile court referrals

These were the top five juvenile court referrals in 2024.

Against Persons	1,199
Alcohol and Drug	1,019
Property Offenses	986
Public Order	557
Traffic	185
Weapons	27

### DELINQUENT REFERRALS





#### **Against Person Offenses**

All assaults, menacing, harassment, terrorizing, gross sexual imposition, robbery

#### **Property Offenses**

Shoplifting, burglary, criminal mischief/vandalism, criminal trespass, all thefts

#### **Public Order**

Disorderly conduct, disturbance of a public school, failure to appear, resisting arrest

#### Weapons

Unlawful possession of a firearm, carrying a loaded firearm in a vehicle, failure to produce a license or inform police, carrying a concealed weapon

#### **Traffic**

Driving under suspension, reckless driving, leaving the scene of an accident

#### **Drug and alcohol**

Any drug or alcohol related offense

#### Referral by location of offense

In 2024, 60% of all delinquent referrals were the result of law violations or behaviors by youth that occurred in the community, such as stores, streets, parks, etc., 13% occurred in the home, 21% were from acts reported to have occurred at a school building or grounds during the school day, and 6% were law enforcement calls to residential placement facilities.

#### **Analysis of Juvenile Offenders**

#### Age

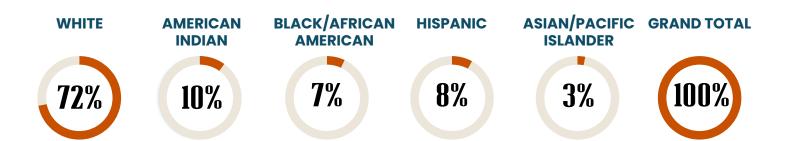
The most common youth age referred to the juvenile courts for delinquent behavior in 2024 was 17. Juveniles aged 13 and younger accounted for 25% of all court referrals.

#### Gender

In 2024, males committed 62% of delinquent acts referred to the juvenile courts, while females accounted for 38% of referrals.

#### Race

North Dakota school enrollment for grades 5 through 12 shows that the white population remained the largest race or ethnicity group in North Dakota at 72% of the population. The Chart below depicts the breakout for all race or ethnic groups:



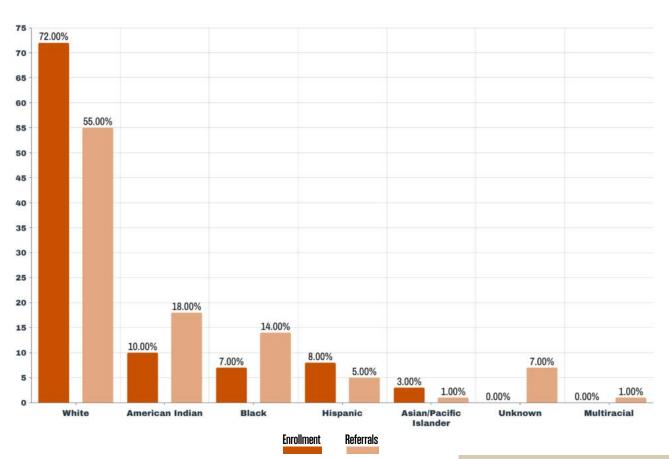




The American Indian and Black/African American population are overrepresented in the number of referrals sent to the juvenile court. Total delinquent referrals for the American Indian populations were 18% of the overall total while they are only 10% of the general population. Black/African Americans were 14% of the overall referral totals while only 7% of the total population.

## JUVENILE SCHOOL POPULATION VS PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION THAT RECEIVED REFERRALS

The school enrollment race and ethnicity groups do not match the juvenile court race and ethnicity groups; therefore, unknown and multiracial are listed as 0% for school enrollment when compared to juvenile court race



## Delinquency by Primary Offense Type

The most common primary offense types were offenses against persons (30%), followed by drug and alcohol offenses (25%), property offenses (25%), public order (14%), traffic offenses (5%) and weapons offenses (<1%).

### DELINQUENCY BY PRIMARY OFFENSE TYPE - RACE

	Against Persons	Drug and Alcohol	Property	Public Order	Traffic	Weapons
American Indian or Alaskan Native	26.5%	29.3%	26.4%	14.1%	2.3%	1.4%
Asian or Pacific Islander	40.0%	14.3%	28.6%	11.4%	5.7%	<1%
Black	32.0%	15.3%	31.3%	17.6%	1.9%	1.9%
Hispanic	24.9%	25.3%	23.1%	19.9%	5.1%	1.8%
Multiracial	48.6%	11.4%	21.4%	17.1%	1.4%	<1%
Unknown	31.7%	23.3%	20.1%	15.5%	8.7%	0.6%
White	28.4%	26.4%	23.6%	15.1%	5.7%	0.8%

## Outcome of Juvenile Delinquent Offenses

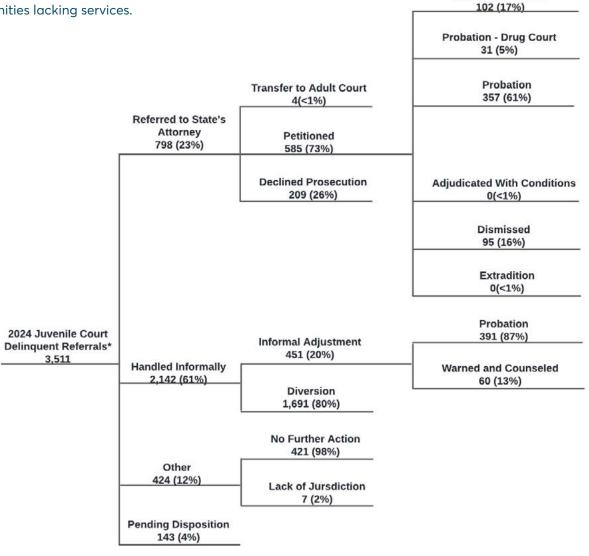
## Processing of Delinquency Cases

North Dakota law requires that dispositions 1) be individualized based on the outcome of the youth's risk and needs assessment and include steps to repair the harm caused to the victim, 2) treat and rehabilitate the youth, and 3) ensure the community's safety. A critical task for juvenile court intake officers is to connect delinquent youth and families to appropriate programs in their community. For low-risk youth, diversion can occur via letter, phone call, or meeting with juvenile court staff or may involve a referral to restorative justice or an education program. Directive skill-based teaching can also be delivered in short visits with youth with repeat delinquent referrals or in communities lacking services.

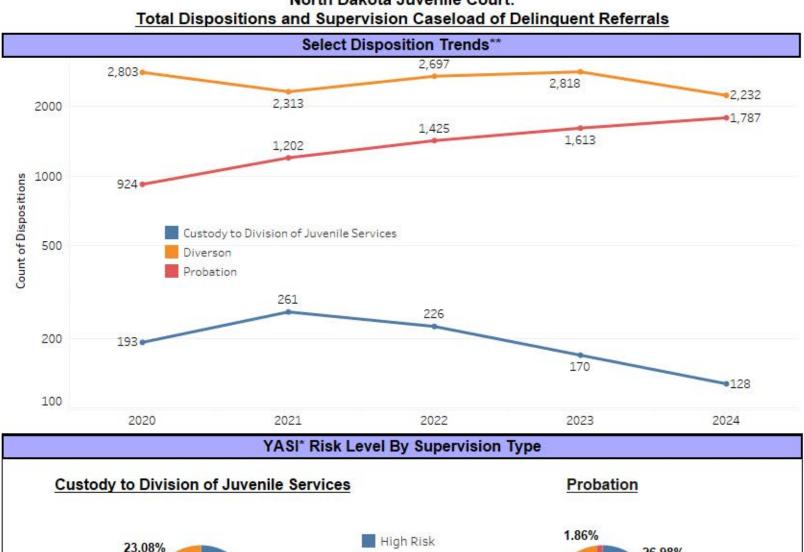
The law requires that each youth in a formal delinquency petition receive a pre-dispositional assessment, which must include a risk and needs assessment. This ensures that each disposition specifically targets the delinquency or crime-producing behaviors. A youth's commitment to the Division of Juvenile Services is only considered a last resort when all other community treatment options have been exhausted or when public safety requires such an outcome. Transfer to adult court is rare and can be done only through a voluntary request by the youth or by following the process under NDCC 27-20.4.

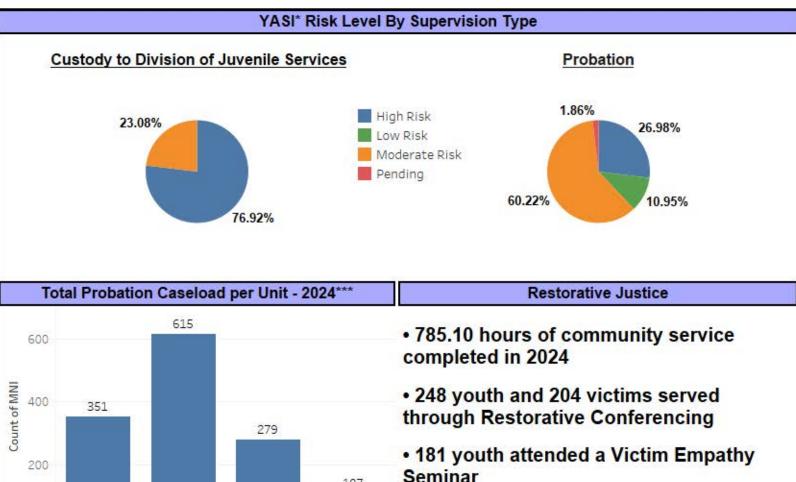
Custody to Division of

**Juvenile Services** 



## North Dakota Juvenile Court:





0

Unit 1

Unit 3

107

Unit 4

\$151,094.57 collected in restitution

\*\*\*Total probations that started or ended in 2024, NOT number of Youth

Unit 2

<sup>\*\*</sup> Total dispositions given in 2024, regardless of referral year

<sup>\*</sup>North Dakota Juvenile Court uses the Youth Assesment and Screening Instrument (YASI) for risk and needs of youth



## **Screening and Programming**

## 2024 Trauma Screening (TSSCA) Summary

The goal of trauma screening is to identify youth who may have emotional, behavioral, learning, or relationship difficulties due to traumatic stress reactions and who may need further trauma assessment. Screenings occur as early as

possible, often at the first meeting or, at minimum, within the first 30 days of supervision. By law, a screening is also administered upon admission to secure detention, and the results are filed with the court. In 2024, court staff administered 488 trauma screenings.

Score of 0 to 5	406	Indicates some level of trauma-related symptomatology
Score of 6 or higher	82	Indicates moderate to severe traumatic stress symptomatology
Total Screens Performed	488	

## Youth Assessment and Screening Inventory (YASI)

North Dakota juvenile court officers use the validated Youth Assessment and Screening Inventory (YASI) to gauge various risks, needs, and strengths associated with adolescent delinquent behavior. This helps them predict recidivism and effectively manage youth assigned to juvenile court supervision.

#### **YASI Pre-Screens**

The YASI Pre-Screen is primarily used for risk classification, estimating an individual's likelihood of being referred again to the juvenile court for a delinquent referral. Juvenile court officers administer the pre-screen at diversion meetings, informal adjustment conferences, or as part of a predisposition assessment during the formal court process.

#### **YASI Full Screens**

The YASI Full Screen is completed on youth who score moderate or high risk on the pre-screen. It provides a more detailed needs assessment for prioritizing treatment goals. It is also used to guide pretrial recommendations and create comprehensive probation plans.

#### Reassessments

YASI reassessments are conducted every three months while a youth is on supervised probation or whenever services are adjusted. A final assessment is completed at case closure.

Prescreen	700
Full Assessment	727
Reassessment	808
Total	2,235

#### **Educational Programming**

Juvenile court officers utilize the evidenced-based Carey Guides, Tools on Devices, and The Change Companies journals with youth on probation to support behavior change. The assignments completed and discussed reinforce the skills and attitudes modeled and supported by the assigned court officer. Workbooks and assignments are selected based on the individual needs of each youth.

Juvenile Court Officers also utilize motivational interviewing and Effective Practices in Community Supervision (EPICS). This means that time spent with youth on probation has specific goals based on that youth's individualized case plan. Structured learning takes place at each visit to a home, school, or juvenile court office. Positive behaviors are modeled and reinforced, while negative behaviors are addressed through disapproval and concrete lessons on how to avoid risky, anti-social behaviors. Incentives and graduated sanctions are used to respond to youth behaviors.

#### Substance Abusing Behaviors Cognitive Class

The juvenile court teaches a cognitive-based class for adolescents referred for drug or alcohol offenses. This program is a collaboration of the juvenile court staff across the state and is available to youth in person at unit juvenile court offices or via Zoom. In 2024, 74 youth were referred to the program and 51 youth successfully completed the program, three youth were waived from the class to seek a higher level of treatment, and 20 youth did not complete the program. This program is free of charge and utilizes an evidence-based curriculum.

#### Delinquency Probation Case Management

Youth are encouraged to explore vocational goals and interests while on probation. This is achieved through the Growth-Focused Case Management process utilized by juvenile court officers to guide youth toward a successful vocation. Court officers assist the youth in exploring future academic or vocational career paths during their probation time. Further training on this promising case management practice is being planned for 2025.

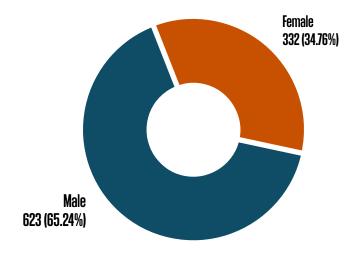
Juvenile probation case management combines traditional monitoring and oversight for

compliance with court orders or consent-based court agreements. The essential function is to improve youth behavior and targeted responses to priority areas of youth risk and needs. Juvenile court officers play an important role in reducing the risk of reoffending, thereby improving public safety while increasing the chances that youth will develop improved cognitive behavior skills and attitudes that will interrupt any trajectory into adult criminality.

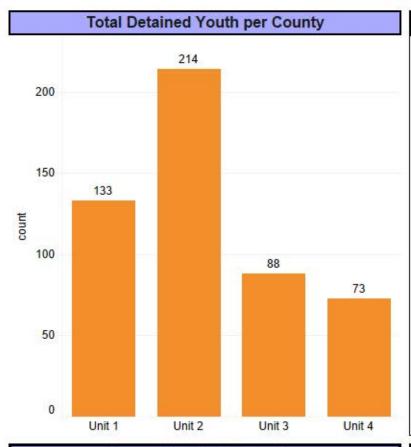
In 2024, the 1155 distinct probations on the statewide caseload involved 955 unique youth. This number includes informal adjustment and formal adjudication cases.

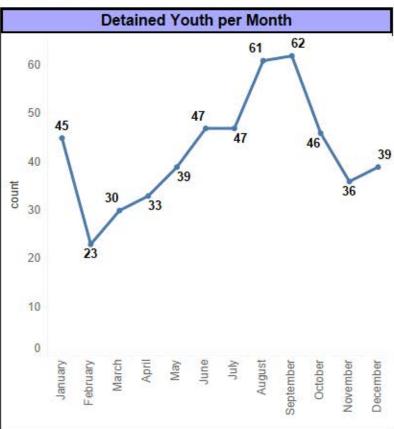
Below are basic demographic information for those individuals:

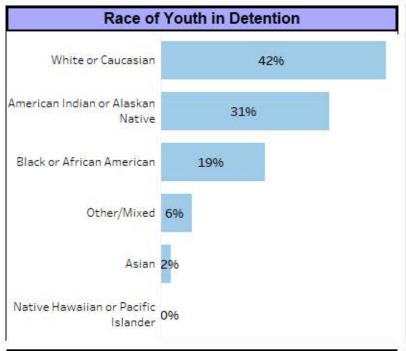
RACE	% OF TOTAL Probations
White	54.24%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	20.10%
Black	13.51%
Hispanic	6.07%
Unknown	3.04%
Multiracial	2.41%
Asian or Pacific Islander	0.63%

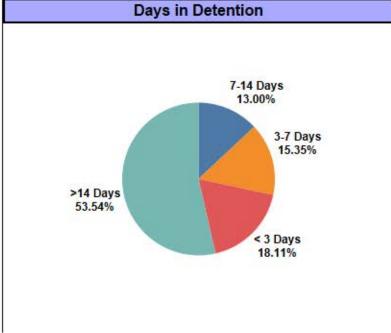


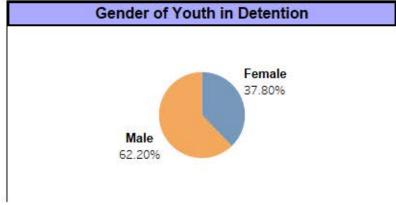
#### North Dakota Juvenile Court 2024 Juvenile Detention

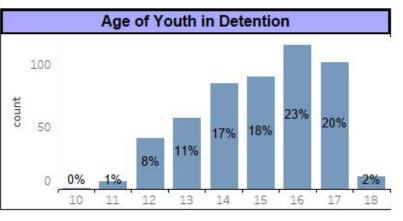






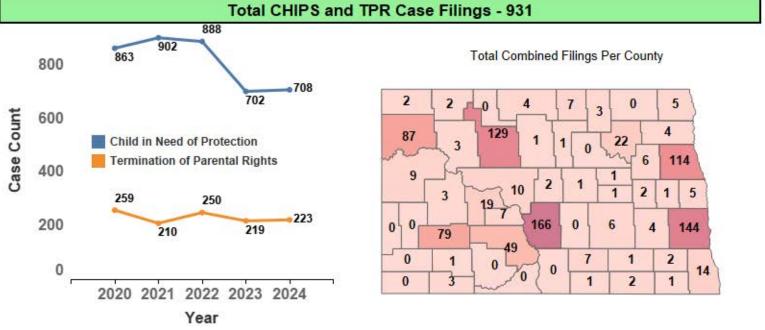


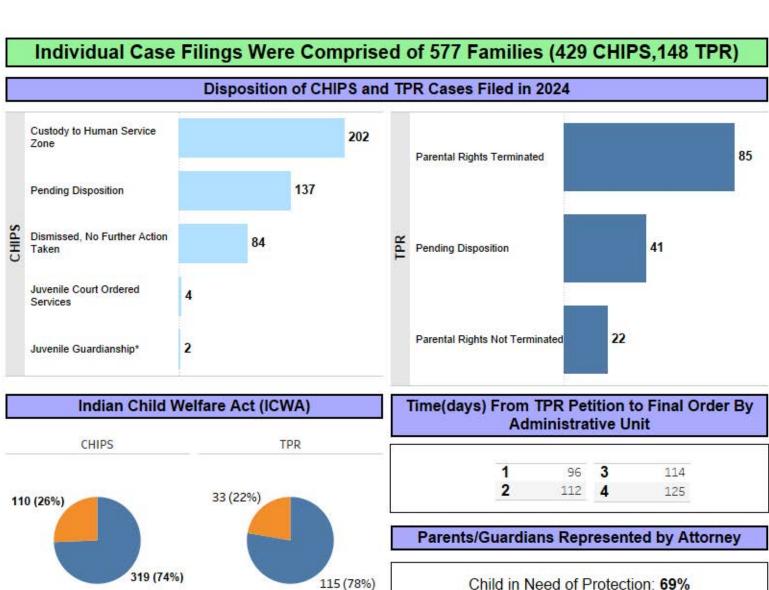






#### North Dakota Juvenile Court 2024 Child in Need of Protection (CHIPS) and Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)





Termination of Parental Rights: 59%

ICWA Does Not Apply

ICWA Applicable





# Child in Need of Protection/Termination of Parental Rights

## Child Abuse and Neglect Reports Received by Court

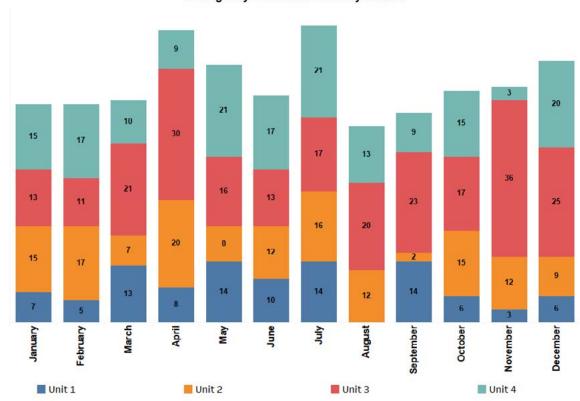
In 2024, the human service zones reported 772 confirmed cases of child abuse and neglect to the juvenile court as required by NDCC 50-25.1-05.2. In these cases, no action is requested from the court.

## **Emergency Protective Custody Orders**

To provide for child safety and court oversight of the emergency removal of children from their homes,

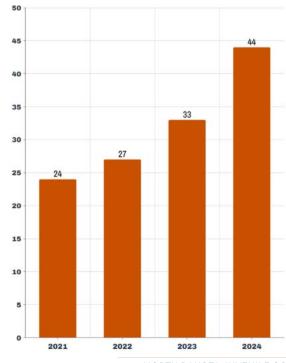
the juvenile court directors or their designees receive requests to authorize emergency protective custody of children. This occurs when a child is reported to be in immediate danger from the child's surroundings, and removal is necessary to protect the child from harm. In 2024, there were 645 emergency removals authorized by either a law enforcement officer or a Juvenile Court. The chart below provides information on removals each month by judicial units:

#### **Emergency Protective Custody Trends**





### **CONTINUED FOSTER CARE YOUTH**



## Juvenile Guardianship Cases

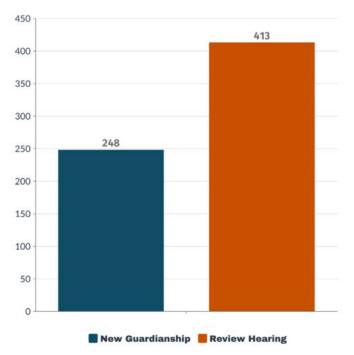
A guardianship of a minor child is a juvenile court process where a judge or referee appoints a guardian to act in the place of a parent of the child when certain circumstances may require someone to care for and make decisions on behalf of the child. The juvenile quardianship case type may arise as a permanent or temporary solution for a child in need of protection, where a relative or other appropriate person is willing to care for the child. Other cases begin as a result of a parent's death, abandonment, or prior arrangements made between the parent and the other party. A statutory duty of the director of juvenile court is to review and examine petitions to establish, modify, or terminate a guardianship of a minor established under Chapter 27-20.1 of the North Dakota Century Code.

A large percentage of private parties requesting guardianship of a child file with the court without the benefit of legal counsel. Self-represented litigants can utilize informational guides and forms on the North Dakota Courts website at the Self-Help Center. Juvenile court staff are often a point of local information for these self-represented litigants to provide timely and understandable access to the juvenile courts for purposes of child guardianships.

Guardianships differ from other court cases in that courts monitor them throughout the time they are in effect. This monitoring includes an annual review of the child's well-being and finances and an assessment of the ongoing need for guardianship.



## JUVENILE GUARDIANSHIP 2024





## Qualified Residential Treatment Placement

When a Human Service Zone or the Division of Juvenile Services determines the placement of a youth in a Qualified Residential Treatment Facility may be necessary, they must first have an assessment done by Maximus Ascend to ensure the placement is appropriate. Maximus Ascend is a contractor with the Department of Human Services. If the placement is found to be appropriate, the juvenile court director must then review the placement to ensure that all the procedural requirements were met.

In 2024, the juvenile court received 162 assessments from Maximus Ascend. The juvenile court director or designee reviewed 135 approvals and made any necessary follow-up to proceed with placement. Twenty-seven of the assessments received were denials of residential placement by Maximus Ascend, which, by Juvenile Procedure Rule 18.1, are not reviewed by the juvenile court.

## Court Improvement Program

The Court Improvement Program (CIP) provides support and resources to North Dakota's state courts, allowing them to evaluate and enhance court processes in response to the needs of children in the child welfare system. The CIP is funded by a federal grant provided by the Administration of Children and Families Children's Bureau.

The CIP grant enables state courts to assess the role, responsibilities and effectiveness of courts in carrying out laws relating to child welfare proceedings. It also allows courts to improve the safety, well-being, and permanency planning for children in foster care. The grant supports court data collection and analysis in partnership with child welfare agencies and North Dakota Tribes. Finally, it provides cross-training opportunities among agencies, tribes, courts, and other key stakeholders.

Updated CIP program requirements for 2024 included focusing on quality hearings in child welfare cases, quality legal representation for parents and children, joint project and collaboration with the state's child welfare agency, as well as supporting participation of legal and judicial partners in all stages of North Dakota's Children and Family Review. The CIP must also use at least 30% of grant funds to collect data jointly with the child welfare system. The data is used to improve case tracking and achievement of permanency goals for children and families.

## **Pre-Petition Legal Representation Pilot Program**

Over the past year, the North Dakota Court Improvement Program, Legal Services of North Dakota, Children and Family Services, and the North Dakota ICWA Partnership grant continued to work on providing pre-petition legal representation to families in two Human Service Zones. The pre-petition legal representation model aims to keep families together while providing early advocacy in child welfare cases before court involvement.

The pre-petition legal representation model continues to operate within the Burleigh County

and Three Rivers Human Service Zones for children at risk of being placed in shelter care. The goal of the model is to maintain children in their homes, mitigate safety issues and decrease the disproportionality rate of American Indian children entering foster care. In 2024, 25 families were referred to the program. Of the families successfully served by the pre-petition team, 70% of the children of those families remained in the home.

## **Indian Child Welfare Act and Race Equity**

The CIP continues to collaborate with child welfare and court professionals such as state's attorneys, parent attorneys, guardian ad items, and judicial officers to improve compliance and implementation of ICWA in the North Dakota court process.

## Lay Guardian Ad Litem Program

In 2024, the CIP completed its facilitation of a workgroup to examine the practices of the Lay Guardian Ad Litem Program. The Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) workgroup met monthly either via Zoom or in person, administered surveys of stakeholders, reviewed and analyzed data from the GAL case management system and other GAL reports, and analyzed the program structure and model of GAL service delivery in Children in Need of Protection, termination of parental

rights and guardianship cases. Findings and recommendations of the GAL workgroup were provided to court and child welfare stakeholders during its assessment. The workgroup's recommendations continue to be reviewed and utilized to make practice improvements within the program.



## **Dual Status Youth Initiative 2024 Update**

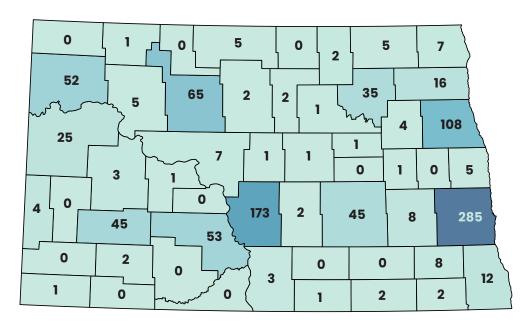
The Court Improvement Program funds and oversees the work of the North Dakota Dual Status Youth Initiative.

Dual Status Youth are those North Dakota youth simultaneously involved or previously involved in the state's child welfare and juvenile justice systems. The North Dakota Dual Status Youth Initiative (DSYI) works to improve collaboration, communication, and exchange of information between agencies. Once children are identified as dual status, the agencies work together to improve outcomes for the youth. This is accomplished by increasing interagency information sharing between juvenile court and child welfare and establishing child and family-centered multidisciplinary policies and practices.

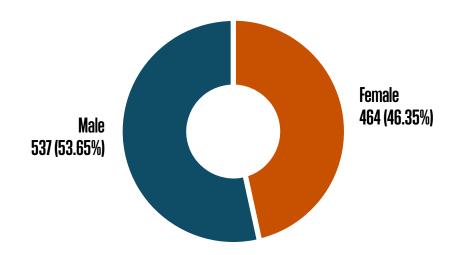
To achieve the best possible oversight and coordination of dual status youth cases, the Human Service Zone Child in Need of Services (CHINS) specialists and the juvenile court have designated a "DSY Liaison" in each perspective area. Roles and responsibilities of the DSY Liaisons include serving as a point of contact for all dual status youth notifications, clarifying policies and practices to agency staff, participating in monthly DSYI workgroup meetings to discuss practice and protocol best practices, and ensuring that child welfare agency staff and juvenile court officers have a complete understanding of their role and responsibilities when working with dual status youth.

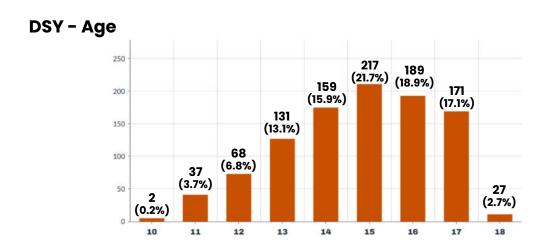
Based on feedback from the DSYI Liaison workgroup, the Court Improvement Program updated the Protocol and Practice Guide in July and created multiple resources to enhance compliance with the DSYI protocol process. Resources include a DSY protocol quick sheet and flow chart to assist the Human Service Zones, Child in Need of Services (CHINS) specialists, and the juvenile court in supporting DSY best practices timelines. The CIP coordinator provides regional training on the DSYI protocol to the CHINS specialists, juvenile court staff, and Zone staff as needed.

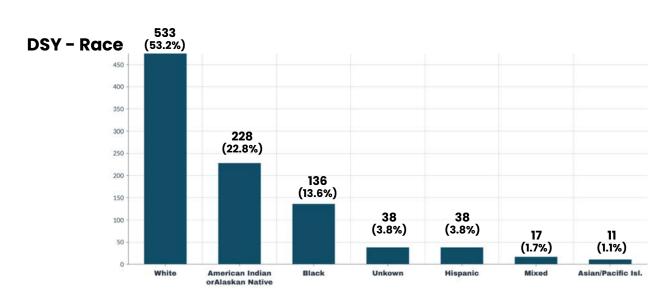
One resource used to improve outcomes for dual status youth is the Family Centered Engagement meeting (FCE). The Village Family Service Center provides the FCE. The meeting consists of a facilitated team process that includes participation from parents, extended family, children, service providers, child welfare staff, and juvenile court staff to make critical decisions regarding the safety and well-being of the child to achieve the safest and least restrictive outcomes that are in the best interest of the dual status youth. In 2024, 170 FCE meetings, along with additional followup meetings, were provided to dual status families. Of the families who participated in an FCE meeting, 97% reported they had an opportunity to listen and share information, and 79 % reported they felt the FCE meeting process was a positive experience In 2024, there were 1001 dual status youth identified by the Initiative. The map below shows where the dual status youth were identified:



# Below is the breakout of gender, age and race for dual status youth in 2024:







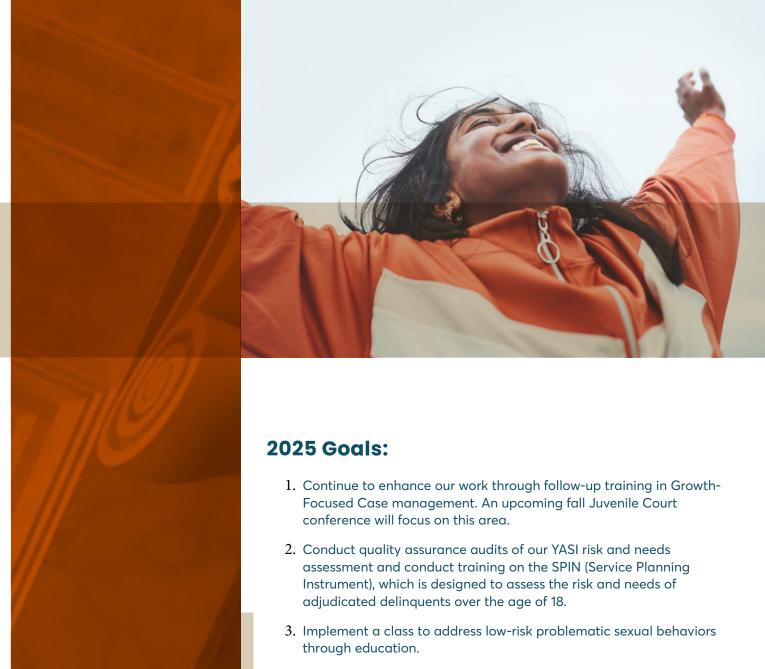


# Juvenile Court Accomplishments and Goals

Key Accomplishments: The juvenile court continues to focus on juvenile justice reform. The work focuses on alternatives to detention, the use of incentives and sanctions for probation youth, the implementation of the SPIN (validated risk assessment tool to use with 18+ youth), and the implementation of Caseworks 2.0 for our validated assessments. A summary of the accomplishments below:

#### **2024 Key Accomplishments**

- 1. Served on committees to develop new fitness to proceed and collateral consequences bill drafts for the 2025 Legislative session.
- Continue collaboration between district court clerks and juvenile court staff to increase consistency in Odyssey case processing across the state.
- Recommended updates to AR19 records retention to align our practice with the North Dakota Century Code.
- 4. Redefined file destruction protocol to include electronic records to align practices with our new case management system (Tyler Enterprise Supervision).
- Continued to educate staff and learn the capabilities of our Enterprise Supervision database to increase our efficiency.
- 6. Updated our YASI Caseworks (Youth Assessment Screening Instrument) risk assessment software to Caseworks 2.0. This version has enhanced data reporting capabilities and has led to increased utilization of growth-focused case management.
- 7. Implemented a probation incentives program in keeping with the legislative changes in the previous session.



- **4.** Continue to explore ways to gain access to statistical information, including enhancements to the Juvenile Dashboard.
- 5. Provide revisions to update juvenile processes for Judicial Officers and develop a public-facing guide to understanding Juvenile Court and navigating the formal court system.
- 6. Continue to fully develop and enhance the Youth Coordinator position.
- 7. Evaluate and address the outdated juvenile staffing study to align with current practices in Juvenile Court.