

ST. LOUIS COUNTY

2018
ANNUAL REPORT



ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

WORKING TOGETHER
TO BUILD THE KIND OF WORLD WE WANT TO LIVE IN



Duluth Courthouse
100 N. 5th Ave. W., #501
Duluth, MN 55802
(218) 726-2323

Govt. Services Center
320 W. 2nd Street, #403
Duluth, MN 55802
(218) 726-2034

Virginia Courthouse
300 S. 5th Ave., #222
Virginia, MN 55792
(218) 749-7101

Hibbing Courthouse
1810 12th Ave. E., #107
Hibbing, MN 55746
(218) 262-0158

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Board of County Commissioners

- 1st District:** Frank Jewell
- 2nd District:** Patrick Boyle
- 3rd District:** Beth Olson
- 4th District:** Paul McDonald
- 5th District:** *Seat Vacant*
- 6th District:** Keith Nelson
- 7th District:** Mike Jugovich

County Administrator
Kevin Gray

2018 Highlights



County Attorney Mark Rubin and Assistant County Attorney Amy Lukasavitz were hosts at a breakfast conversation to stem truancy. In attendance were staff members from the St. Louis County Attorney's Office, St. Louis County Public Health and Human Services, Lutheran Social Services, Arrowhead Regional Corrections, Men as Peacemakers, Duluth Police Department, Sixth Judicial District, and local school officials. The goal of this meeting is to work collectively to identify kids who have school attendance issues, to intervene at an early stage to identify the reasons for the truancy problems and to engage the student and family with support and services to promote academic success.



Tuesday, June 19th, County Attorney Mark Rubin met with newly appointed U.S. Attorney for the District of Minnesota Erica McDonald, Duluth Police Chief Mike Tusken, and St. Louis County Sheriff Ross Litman.



On October 8th, during a press conference held in the County Attorney's Office, Senator Amy Klobuchar announced bipartisan bills to combat the opioid epidemic. The bill was later signed into law on October 24th. Pictured are Senator Amy Klobuchar, Assistant County Attorney Rebekka Stumme, and County Attorney Mark Rubin.



At the November County Board meeting, Office Administrator Wade Backstrom was awarded the Customer Service Star. Pictured are County Attorney Mark Rubin, Commissioner Jugovich, Office Administrator Wade Backstrom, Commissioner Olson, Commissioner Nelson, Commissioner Jewell, Commissioner Boyle, Commissioner Stauber and County Auditor Dicklich.



County Attorney Mark Rubin and members of the County Attorney staff meet with Minnesota Attorney General Elect Keith Ellison.



Letter from Your St. Louis County Attorney

Over forty years have passed since I first stepped into a courtroom as an Assistant St. Louis County Attorney. From that day forward, it has been my honor and privilege to not only represent the State of Minnesota and the County of St. Louis, but also to be the voice of those who needed someone to speak on their behalf.

I think this is why the poem I discovered and have included on the back page of this report resonates so deeply within me. I love the words of Nicolette Sowder, the Creator of Wilder Child, "...and when they're grown and someone has to speak for those who have no voice, may they draw upon that wilder bond those days of tending tender things." We have the opportunity as parents, actually, I consider it an obligation, to raise our children with a sense of our human duty to advocate for others. This is what our attorneys and support staff exemplify in their day to day work on behalf of our fellow citizens.

As you will read in the following pages, we are going on nine years of fulfilling our mission of serving you with integrity rooted in community. I am proud of our accomplishments. Together, we are making a difference. We believe in service and in providing only the best possible advice and work on your behalf. What we do and how we do it is an affirmation of our collective belief in something greater than self...

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Rubin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mark Rubin
St. Louis County Attorney



Benjamin Stromberg

PHHS Division Head

Duluth Office:

Jennifer Barry
Joseph Fischer
Sara Jankofsky
Amy Lukasavitz
Benjamin Ranallo
Patricia Shaffer
Angie Shambour

Virginia Office:

Renae Darland
Jessica Foschi
Leah Stauber

Hibbing Office:

Sharon Chadwick
Gayle Goff

Investigators:

Katherine Finc
William Klein
Shawn Laine

Public Health & Human Services Division

Over the last four years, following a series of high-profile failures of the child protection system elsewhere in the state, nearly every aspect of the child protection system has seen dramatic changes. This resulted in significantly more cases being brought to court. These systemic changes, coupled with the explosion of the opioid epidemic, have resulted in substantial changes to the workloads of PHHS attorneys. Fortunately, 2018 marked the first time in years that the number of new child protection cases did not increase. The numbers essentially held steady from the all-time high in 2017. Notably however, with the provision of new staff resources from the County Board in 2018, this led to roughly a 50% increase in the number of child protection files which we were able to close.

After seeing a record number of civil commitment petitions filed in 2017 (a 50% increase over 2012) that number continued to rise dramatically in 2018, with a 38% increase over 2017. This increase, which is being experienced throughout the state, has coincided with statutory changes mandating expeditious treatment of civilly committed individuals but without any corresponding increase in the resources available to address these needs, resulting in more work for the attorneys and staff in this office.

While much of the PHHS division's work is responsive in nature, in recent years we have expanded our prevention work in an effort to stop problems before they start. For example, early in the 2016-2017 school year, the Duluth Student Attendance Review Board (SARB) coordinated by Lutheran Social Services disbanded due to lack of funding. Recognizing that the absence of SARB would likely lead to dozens, if not hundreds, of truancy matters being referred directly to court, the PHHS Division of the County Attorney's Office, in partnership with the County Human Services Department, Arrowhead Regional Corrections, Men as Peacemakers, and local school districts, began administering the SARB program. After a successful first year in 2016-2017, the reconstituted SARB built on that success in 2017-2018, nearly doubling the number of students who completed the truancy diversion class from 50 to 96. Perhaps even more significant, in 2017-2018, SARB was able to connect 116 students (up from 79 the year before), with needed services such as diagnostic assessments, individual education plans, chemical dependency treatment, and county case management services. Expanding on these efforts in the future, the St. Louis County Attorney's Office is supporting the Preventure Collaborative in a pilot project with two local school districts during the 2019-2020 school year to reduce drug and alcohol use by high-risk adolescents.


Kim Maki

Civil Division Head

Duluth Office:

 Nick Campanario
 Jim Nephew
 Chris Pinkert
 Nora Sandstad
 Thomas Stanley

Civil Division

The Civil Division of the County Attorney's Office is responsible for the day-to-day legal representation of the county, its commissioners, administrators and department staff in all non-criminal and non-social services matters. The Division provided advice and counsel on many county projects throughout 2018, including the following:

- Working with Mary Garness, the county's new Director of Public Records and Property Valuation, to make structural improvements to assessment and tax court litigation processes
- Acquiring real estate and contracting for the construction of the new Virginia Government Services Center
- Contracting for the construction of the new Cook Public Works facility
- Preparing for an exchange of many parcels of tax forfeited land with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Exploratory work relating to the development of a municipal solid waste landfill
- Developing a policy streamlining the platting process for leased lots
- Continued activities associated with the Lake Superior Wetland Bank, including additional ditch abandonment work

The Civil Division also represented the county in litigation matters. Most notably, the Division worked with a national law firm to commence a case against opioid manufacturers, seeking injunctive relief and monetary damages. Another notable proceeding was the Division's defense of the county's analysis regarding elected officials' correspondence under the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. The Division also continued proceedings relative to the ownership of Pastoret Terrace, a blighted structure located in downtown Duluth. Additionally, the Division handled claims brought against the county by a former jail inmate, a former county corrections officer, and a recipient of public assistance benefits.

As always, contract drafting and review is a steady source of work for the Civil Division. In 2018, the Division reviewed and executed over 750 contracts, enabling the county to fulfill its duties relative to public safety, infrastructure, taxation, and other obligations and goals. The Division also handled all data requests submitted to the County Attorney's Office and assisted in responding to data requests submitted to other county departments, as well. The Division also responded to public inquiries and provided assistance to other divisions of the County Attorney's Office when needed. With over 100 years of combined legal experience, the Civil Division will continue to use its knowledge, expertise and wisdom to serve the county and its citizens in 2019 and the future.



Gary Bjorklund
Criminal Division
Head – Duluth

- Duluth Office:**
 Jon Holets
 Corey Horn
 Anthony Rubin
 Nate Stumme
 Rebekka Stumme
 Kristen Swanson
 Vicky Wanta
 Steve Schneider
Special Projects/Paralegal

Criminal Division/Duluth

Prosecutors in Duluth tried several significant criminal cases in 2018. Month-long trials involving Noah King and Deandre Davenport resulted in First Degree Murder convictions for the two defendants for their involvement in the murder of William Grahek. The County Attorney's Office also partnered with the United States Attorney's Office in the successful prosecution in U.S. Federal Court of defendants who were sex-trafficking a juvenile female. Numerous other offenders were held accountable for their crimes after being convicted at trial.

The Criminal Division in Duluth prosecuted 1,997 criminal cases this past year. This number included 1,388 felonies, eight homicide cases, three attempted homicide cases, and 392 assault and sexual assault cases. The opioid epidemic continues to be an ongoing problem and our office worked closely with the Lake Superior Drug and Violent Crimes Task Force in the prosecution of over 400 felony drug cases.

Prosecutors continue to work collaboratively with several multi-disciplinary teams and specialty courts. The teams include: First Witness, Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence Response Team, Domestic Violence Restorative Circle, Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee, Lake Superior Drug and Violent Crimes Task Force, Child Abduction Response Team, and Crisis Intervention Team. Also, our attorneys are active with the Southern St. Louis County Drug Court, the Southern St. Louis County DWI Court, the Southern St. Louis County Mental Health Court, and the Southern St. Louis County Veterans' Court.

Duluth prosecutors and victim-witness staff are also members of the Duluth SAKI (Sexual Assault Kit Initiative) Team. This past year the entire back-log of untested kits were submitted for testing. Based on DNA results, renewed investigations resulted, and a number of cases have been referred and charged by the St. Louis County Attorney's Office. The staff has worked closely with the Duluth Police Department to adopt new protocols for handling sexual assault kits and the review of the anonymous reporting protocols. This past September, the Duluth SAKI Team hosted the 2018 SAKI Assembly of Cities, a three-day conference, attended by SAKI Grant recipients from across the country.

Attorneys in this office also provided more than 150 hours of training to numerous stakeholders in the criminal justice system. The training was provided for sexual assault advocates, law enforcement officers, corrections officers, sexual assault nurse examiners, and social workers in the St. Louis County Initial Intervention Unit.

Our staff of attorneys and victim-witness advocates also worked with representatives from Arrowhead Regional Corrections this past year in a Continuing Improvement Project. The Project identified gaps in services being offered to victims of crime and resulted in new procedures and protocols which will enhance our existing services to victims.

**VICTIM /
WITNESS
DIVISION**

- Duluth Office:**
 Anne Fisk
 Tara Haynes
 Jerome Koneczny
 Lori Ulvi

- Virginia Office:**
 Michael O'Bryan
- Hibbing Office:**
 Elaine Lee

- Duluth Adult Division**
 218-726-2323
 1-800-450-9777, Ext. 2323

- Duluth Juvenile Division**
 218-726-2034
 1-800-450-9777, Ext. 2034

- Hibbing**
 218-262-0158
 1-800-450-9777, Ext. 8158

- Virginia**
 218-749-7101
 1-800-450-9777, Ext. 7101


Jessica Fralich

Criminal Division
Head – Range

Virginia Office:

Chris Florey
Karl Sundquist
Bonnie Thayer

Hibbing Office:

Stacey Sundquist
Jeff Vlatkovich

Criminal Division/Iron Range

Prosecutors on the Iron Range have continued to see an increase in criminal litigation with more than thirty cases tried in 2018. The year ended with two new homicide cases in the Hibbing office. They also remain focused on the ever-increasing opioid epidemic.

The attorneys within the division are members of several multi-disciplinary teams including the Range Treatment Court, the Iron Range Committee on Equal Justice, St. Louis County Adult Protection Multi-disciplinary Team, Range Coordinated Community Response Team, and the Sexual Assault Response Team of Northern St. Louis County. They also served as founding members for the development of the Northern St. Louis County Mental Health Court scheduled to begin in 2019. By participating in these teams and courts, prosecutors continue their commitment to developing strong relationships with community partners, thereby increasing offender accountability and access to services for those in need.

Division staff remains committed to public service and community safety, as well. They participate and hold positions in many agencies dedicated to these objectives, including the United Way, law enforcement advisory boards, various treatment agencies, the Mesabi Humane Society, and other local organizations across the Iron Range. These attorneys are committed to open dialogues regarding issues that are affecting the community at large and have sat on various panels geared at addressing those concerns. They also participated in the annual “Bring Your Child to Work” event at the Virginia Courthouse, which included a mock trial where children were able to see an example of the criminal justice system at work.

Iron Range prosecutors, like their southern counterparts, are committed to providing training and education both to agency partners and the community at large. As such, they participated in various speaking engagements across the Iron Range, including to various schools and law enforcement agencies.

2018 was a year of transition for the Iron Range. Two new judges were appointed to the bench and a new calendaring system went into effect in January of 2019. Prosecutors continue to work with the judiciary and administration to make these changes with the ultimate goal being to resolve cases within one year.

Victim/Witness Division

The goals of the Victim-Witness Services Division of the County Attorney’s Office are to help ease the physical, emotional, and financial hardships caused by criminal victimization. With our office providing comprehensive services to victims of and witnesses to crime, our goal is to also help reduce the confusion and inconvenience that may be caused by involvement in the criminal justice system.

QUESTIONS & CONCERNS – If you do not understand your rights or have questions or concerns, please call one of the numbers to the left and someone will help you.

Wade Backstrom

Office Administrator

Duluth Courthouse Office:

Yvonne Kalin *Supervisor*

Tammera Bastie

Betty Christenson

Alaisa Knowlton

Rachel Lambert

Corrie O'Neill

Tiffany Peterson

Angel Ricker

Stephanie Shearer

Lindsey Sweeney

Cynthia Zuk

Duluth Government Services Office:

Diane Lundberg *Supervisor*

Jackie Calvert

Diane Eck

Janessa Jurek

Laura Picconatto

Tianna Zembo

Virginia Office:

Alaina Denny *Supervisor*

Patti Everson

Heather Giersdorf

Sunnie Hardy

Tammy Scorich

Hibbing Office:

Alaina Denny *Supervisor*

Julie Larson

Angela Loisel

Char Meinzer

Marla Padgett

Administration and Initiatives



Administration

Wade Backstrom leads the 27-member Administrative Division of the St. Louis County Attorney's Office and is responsible for planning and executing a comprehensive range of administrative duties in support of the office's mission. Responsibilities include human resource management, technology, and information systems management. Principal among these duties is the preparation and execution of the office's \$8 million annual budget.

Three clerical supervisors, Yvonne Kalin, Diane Lundberg, and Alaina Denny, supervise highly skilled clerical teams in Duluth, Hibbing, and Virginia, and are responsible for the maintenance of the case management system of the office. Their responsibilities include the preparation of statistical reports for office use and mandatory monthly and annual reports for St. Louis County Administration, the County Board, and the state and federal governments

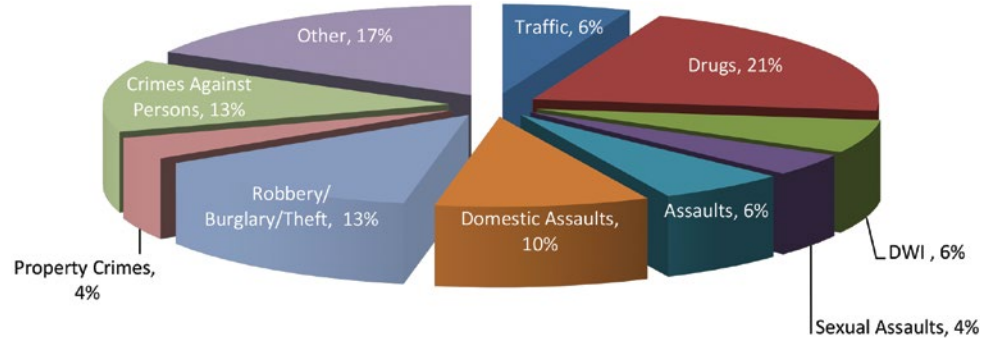
Initiatives

The St. Louis County Attorney's Office was awarded the \$280,000 two-year Prosecutorial Service to Crime Victims grant in October of 2017. This grant is made possible by the U.S. Department of Justice Federal Victims of Crime Act, in conjunction with the Minnesota Office of Justice Programs, which is funded by the collection of federal fines and fees (not taxpayer dollars). The Prosecutorial Service to Crime Victims grant provides additional resources to increase the level of service to victims of domestic abuse, sexual assault, and other forms of personal victimization.

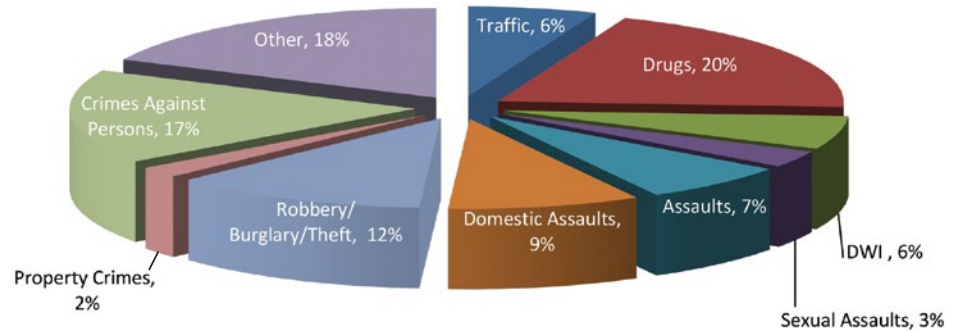
Over the past year, this grant has enabled the office to complete an audit, the findings of which are being utilized to create improved working practices to better serve victims of crime. We have developed new notification letters and pamphlets and crafted a survey to encourage feedback from the people we serve. The additional funding provided resources to update Northern St. Louis County Attorney's victim-witness lounges. The grant enabled us to purchase much needed furniture so victims and witnesses can have safe, secure and comfortable waiting areas. With additional staff, our victim-witness team also has steadily increased the number of applications submitted on behalf of victims for the Crime Victims Reparations Fund. In 2018, victims within the county received \$139,755.87 in benefits to assist them with medical and counseling bills, lost wages, etc. For comparison, in 2016 victims within St. Louis County received \$57,122.07 in funding from the Crime Victim Reparations Board. We also are continuing to encourage victims to apply for restitution to hold offenders accountable by requiring them to contribute to expenses arising as a result of crime. Finally, the grant has generously provided funding to directly assist crime victims with emergency needs.

Percent of Adult Referrals by Crime Type

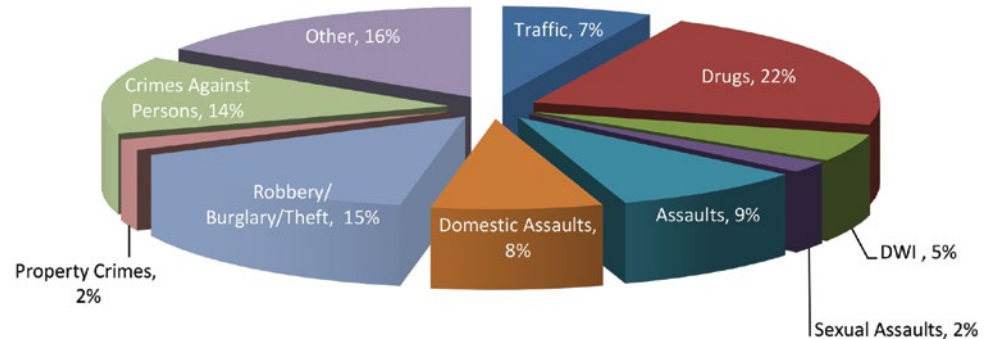
**Adult Referrals By Crime Type
2018**



**Adult Referrals By Crime Type
2017**

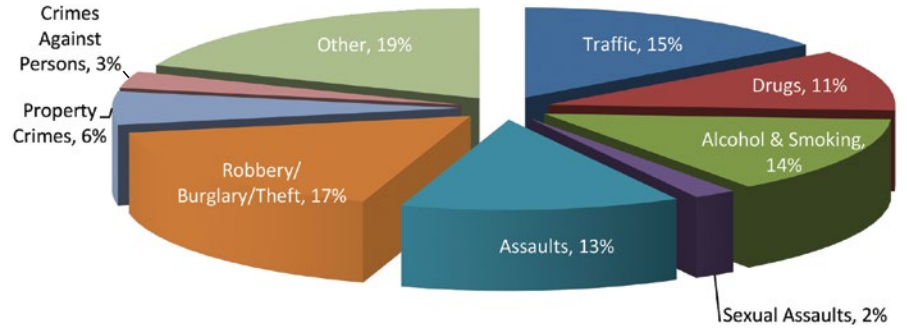


**Adult Referrals By Crime Type
2016**

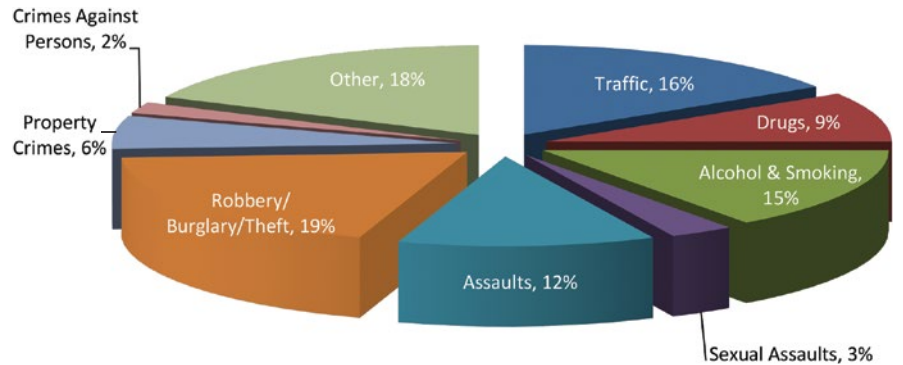


Percent of Juvenile Referrals by Crime Type

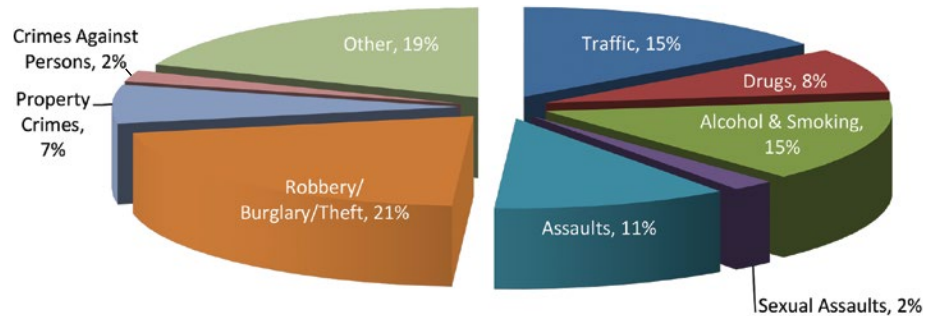
**Juvenile Referrals By Crime Type
2018**



**Juvenile Referrals By Crime Type
2017**

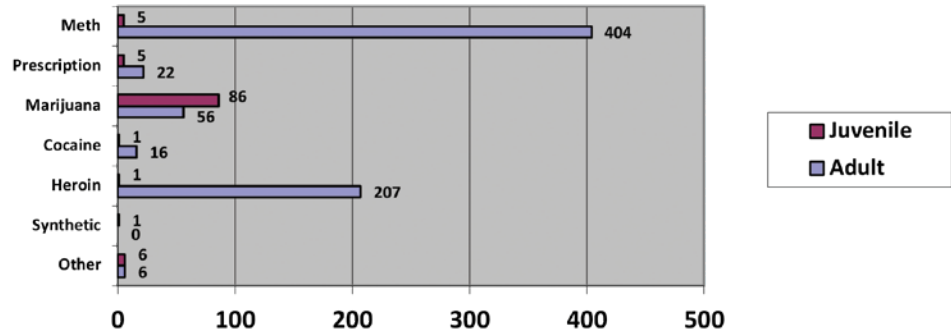


**Juvenile Referrals By Crime Type
2016**

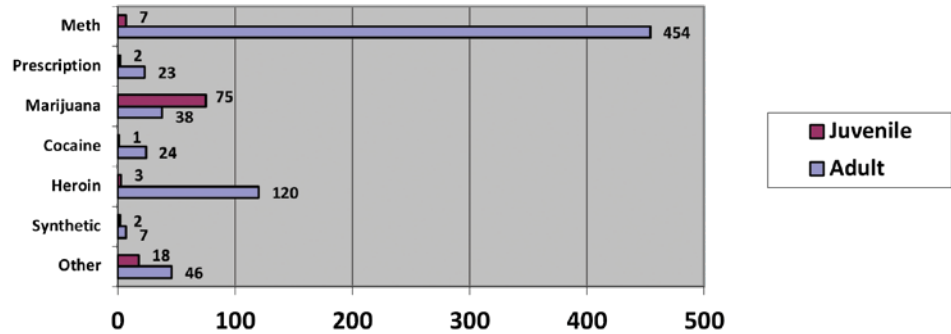


Drug Referrals By Drug Type

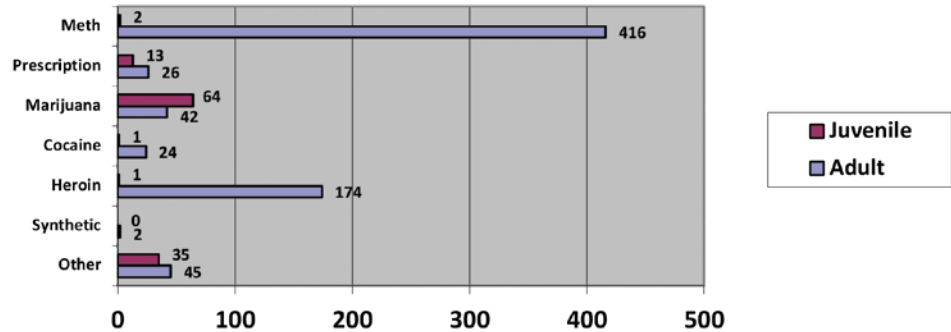
**Drug Referrals by Drug Type
2018**



**Drug Referrals by Drug Type
2017**



**Drug Referrals by Drug Type
2016**



*M*ay we raise children
who love the unloved
things – the dandelion, the
worms & spiderlings.

*Children who sense
the rose needs the thorn*

*& run into rainswept days
the same way they
turn towards sun...*

*And when they're grown &
someone has to speak for those
who have no voice*

*may they draw upon that
wilder bond, those days of
tending tender things*

and be the ones.

Nicolette Sowder
www.wilderchild.com