

2014
ANNUAL REPORT

ST. LOUIS COUNTY



ATTORNEY'S OFFICE



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SUCCEEDING TOGETHER**

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Summit to Undo Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking in Minnesota

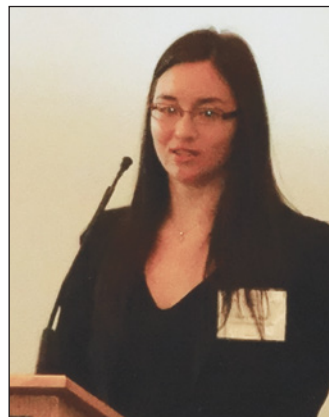
St. Louis County Attorney Mark Rubin has been one of Minnesota’s collaborative leaders in being committed to raising awareness and supporting efforts to protect victims of sex trafficking.

In May, Assistant St. Louis County Attorney Vicky Wanta attended the Summit to Undo Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking in Minnesota. Wanta and prosecutors from around the state were told that Minnesota children as young as 12 to 14 are being sold for sex at truck stops, motels, cabins, apartments and houses.

In 2014, Wanta used that knowledge to present a seminar on sex trafficking to a group of local hoteliers in Duluth. She explained how big the problem is and what is being done to combat it. A major step in safeguarding vulnerable youth was the passage of the Safe Harbor Law for Sexually Exploited Youth that went into effect in August. The law was designed to ensure that instead of prosecuting the children for prostitution, juveniles who are sexually exploited or at risk of exploitation are treated as children in need of protection. This was the practice in St. Louis County even before the change in the law.

In the most recent statistics available, Wanta told those in the lodging business that approximately 35 girls told the Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault (PAVSA) that they had been trafficked. The FBI has identified the Twin Cities as one of the nation’s 13 largest centers for child prostitution. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children estimates that 100,000 children are exploited for prostitution annually in the U.S.

Safe Harbor creates a system of response called “No Wrong Door” to identify child victims of sexual exploitation and move them towards recovery and healing while holding traffickers and purchasers of children responsible for their actions.





(ON FRONT COVER)

The photograph on the cover of annual report was taken when St. Louis County Attorney Mark Rubin and other county and city leaders announced that the Duluth Model's "Coordinated Community Response to Domestic Violence" -- a partnership between Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (DAIP) and criminal justice agencies in St. Louis County and the city of Duluth -- received the 2014 International Future Policy Gold Award for Ending Violence against Women and Girls. The award was presented by the World Future Council, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women for the Duluth Model's work in "prioritizing safety and autonomy of survivors while holding perpetrators accountable through community-wide coordinated response, including a unique partnership between non-profit and government agencies."

Board of County Commissioners

- 1st District:** Frank Jewell
- 2nd District:** Patrick Boyle
- 3rd District:** Chris Dahlberg
- 4th District:** Tom Rukavina
- 5th District:** Pete Stauber
- 6th District:** Keith Nelson
- 7th District:** Steve Raukar

Letter from St. Louis County Attorney Mark S. Rubin

"Dedicated here to the unfinished work"

Four years ago, I told the good people of St. Louis County that my record was my promise. I asked to be elected not only on what I said I would do, but because of what I had already done -- my record.

I have been blessed to work with an amazing group of dedicated attorneys and support staff. Together, we have done some excellent work on behalf of our fellow citizens. We are not done. I am a believer in seeing things through. In the words of President Abraham Lincoln, we have "unfinished work" to do.

Our County Board, Administration and Departments will continue to receive the highest quality in-house legal advice.

We will continue to share the state-wide leadership to address the scourge of sex trafficking and work with First Witness Child Advocacy Center to protect our children from physical and sexual abuse. We will help churches and organizations do a better job in the reporting of abuse. Through our work with the dedicated Public Health and Human Services (PHHS) workers, neglected, mistreated vulnerable children will continue to have fierce advocates.

Working with our partners in law enforcement and the U.S. Attorney's Office, criminals and drug dealers will be held accountable. Our fair handling of cases will also reflect our appreciation of the reality of addictions and unmet mental health needs as we build on the success of Drug, DWI and Mental Health specialty courts.

We will continue our leadership and collaboration with our regional county and municipal attorneys and the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) on the issue of domestic violence. Our partnerships with the Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault (PAVSA) and the Range Sexual Assault Program will continue to be critical in addressing the crime of sexual assault.

I have tried to engage our citizens through community conversations, Compstat (the sharing of the police's compilation of computer statistics on crime), and our western neighborhoods initiative. We are building relationships based on trust, honesty and understanding. Along these lines, I will continue to offer training to our local media representatives though our short course on criminal procedure.

Our Juvenile Youth Accountability Program is a success. Working with Men as Peacemakers, we are meaningfully diverting low level offenders completely out of the criminal justice system, allowing us to focus resources on more serious juvenile offenders.

We are doing a much better job on investigating and prosecuting those who obtain public assistance by fraud. We will build on our success.

And in everything we do, we continue to ensure that racial equity and fairness is self-evident in all of our actions. Our shared leadership in the American Bar Association recognized Racial Justice Improvement Project addressing racial disparity in pre-trial detention has already made a positive difference.

My record, our record, continues to be my promise. I am honored to serve as your St. Louis County Attorney.

Mark Rubin
St. Louis County Attorney



Gary Bjorklund

Criminal Division Head

Duluth Office:

Jessica Fralich

Jon Holets

Chris Pinkert

Nate Stumme

Rebekka Stumme

Kristen Swanson

Vicky Wanta

Virginia Office:

Michelle Anderson

Gordon Coldagelli

Leah Stauber

Hibbing Office:

Brian Simonson

Karl Sundquist

Jeff Vlatkovich

Criminal Division

The Criminal Division of the St. Louis County Attorney’s Office is responsible for charging and prosecuting all levels of adult crimes that occur in St. Louis County, including all felonies, gross misdemeanors, misdemeanors, and county ordinances.

Assistant St. Louis County Attorney Gary Bjorklund leads the division. In 2014, 3,361 cases were referred by law enforcement to the county attorney’s office, a slight decrease over the number of cases referred for prosecution the previous year.

However, there was a substantial increase in the number of drug cases prosecuted. In 2014, 642 drug cases were referred by law enforcement for prosecution -- an increase of 134 from the previous year. This large increase in drug prosecution can be attributed in part to opioid addictions and an influx of heroin into the Northland.

St. Louis County prosecutors work closely with local drug task forces and other law enforcement agencies to identify major suppliers of heroin into the area and ensure that they are aggressively prosecuted to the full extent allowed by law.

The county attorney’s office is a member of OARS (Opioid Abuse Response Strategies). This is a multi-disciplinary team which develops strategies to combat the heroin epidemic and opioid addiction. Prosecutors work closely with other team members from the north and south St. Louis County Drug Courts to ensure that the latest protocols and treatment options are utilized to address opioid addictions of drug court participants. The county attorney’s office also acted with other agencies in promoting community awareness of the heroin problem in the Northland and will be involved in town forums to help educate the public on this serious problem.

The criminal division prosecuted several homicide cases this past year. Raymond Weeks was sentenced to 30 years in prison for the stabbing death of Kevin Tyman. Joella Tucker was sentenced to 11 years in prison for her role in the murder. Chris Peterson received a 40-year sentence for intentionally suffocating his one-year-old daughter. At the end of 2014, there were eight St. Louis County murder cases pending in State District Court.

Criminal division prosecutors are also involved in DWI , Drug, and Mental Health Problem-Solving specialty courts. Additionally, prosecutors set up and conducted ongoing training to law enforcement in the latest changes in laws and regulations, as well as educating law enforcement and other Northeastern Minnesota prosecutors on the investigation and prosecution of domestic violence cases.


Patty Wheeler

Victim/Witness Director

Duluth Office:

Anne Fisk

Lori Ulvi

Virginia Office:

Michael O'Bryan

Hibbing Office:

Elaine Lee

Victim/Witness Division

The goal of the Victim/Witness Services Division is to help ease the physical, emotional and financial hardships caused by criminal victimization and to reduce the confusion and inconvenience that might be caused by involvement in the criminal justice system by providing comprehensive services to victims and witnesses of crime.

Each of the St. Louis County Attorney's offices in Duluth, Hibbing and Virginia has a Victim/Witness staff member. Patty Wheeler is the division director.

The office makes initial contact with a victim by letter informing them of the charges filed against the offender. Included in that letter is a brochure explaining their rights as a victim and a request for them to call the office so that advocates can get input from them and address any questions or concerns they may have. Staff tries to make contact with every victim by telephone to address any needs they might have as their case moves through the system.

Often, the biggest part of the victim/witness office's work is listening. The staff handles thousands of calls, texts and e-mails from victims and witnesses. The office is responsible for ensuring that the Minnesota Crime Victims Rights laws are upheld. Victims are often feeling afraid or confused, and witnesses might be frustrated or even angry with a system they do not understand and sometimes may seem not victim friendly. However, information about court advocacy, notification of hearing dates, trial preparation, working with other community programs to support them and a myriad of other issues are competently and compassionately dealt with by the advocates.

The division works closely with other organizations such as Safe Haven, the American Indian Community Housing Organization (AICHO), First Witness Child Advocacy Center, the Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault (PAVSA), Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) Men as Peacemakers and Advocates for Family Peace to make sure victims' needs are met and they are receiving the comprehensive support and services they need. Staff also attends community meetings and training sessions to talk about victim issues.

The division is responsible for getting victims and witnesses to court for trials. Staff helps find witnesses, stays in contact with them, and keeps them informed of trial and hearing dates which can change multiple times.

The division also coordinates the Youth Accountability Program, providing an alternative to delinquency court or prosecution. The goal of the program is to develop reasonable alternatives to the juvenile justice system which reduces court costs and caseload burdens. The program includes parents and helps them and their child to truly understand the impact of poor decisions. And it provides some tools for a more successful future.



Patricia Shaffer

PHHS Division Head

Duluth Office:

Jennifer Barry
Joseph Fischer
Heather Korpela
Clarissa McDonald
Charles Schumacher
Angie Shambour
Benjamin Stromberg
Joanne Vavrosky

Hibbing Office:

Gayle Goff
Stacey Sundquist

Virginia Office:

Sharon Chadwick
Renaë Darland

Investigators:

Katherine Finc
William Klein
Shawn Laine

Public Health & Human Services Division

The Public Health and Human Service Division of the county attorney's office is comprised of 12 attorneys and three investigators with staff located in Duluth, Virginia and Hibbing. The division provides legal representation to the county's largest department, the Public Health and Human Services Department. Patricia Shaffer leads the division.

The division's primary mission is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the county's most vulnerable residents. This simply stated mission requires division staff to be proficient in a wide variety of legal matters.

The staff provides legal representation to the county's child support unit. This starts with determining the child's parents. Last year, the division established legal paternity (legal fathers) for 166 children. Once paternity is established, the division assists the child support unit in establishing and modifying child support along with taking enforcement actions if a parent is not meeting their obligations to the child.

The division also represents the department in child protection matters. When parents are unable or unwilling to provide basic health and safety for children, often the only way to ensure the child's needs are being met is through the court system. Cases were brought to court last year regarding 159 families due to abuse and/or neglect.

The division provides representation for adult protective services as well. When an adult places themselves or others in danger as a result of a mental illness, chemical dependency or developmental disability, the division is asked to file a commitment petition to secure needed treatment. The types of situations involved range from someone not providing their basic needs of food, clothing, shelter or medical care or being threatening or assaultive or engaging in self-injurious behaviors. The division initiated 168 civil commitment actions last year. Finally, the division was involved in 28 guardianship actions to help individuals unable to make responsible personal decisions for themselves, such as those suffering from cognitive disorders like dementia, and for whom there are no responsible relatives willing or able to provide needed care and supervision.

The division also prosecutes juvenile delinquency. Children older than 10 years old are considered responsible for their own actions. Unfortunately, some children make bad choices. Last year, the division received 1528 referrals for criminal charges. The division was able to offer 22% of those children an opportunity for rehabilitation without court involvement. This was possible through a diversion program known as the Youth Accountability Program.

The above areas represent the five largest areas of the division's practice. Other areas of practice include advising the financial assistance unit of the PHHS Department on public assistance eligibility questions, public assistance fraud investigations and prosecutions, and benefit recovery. The division also advises the agency on a variety of issues, such as data privacy, licensing matters, public health nuisance and lead abatement, authorizations for final disposition of decedents, and it reviews a wide variety of contracts for the department. Last year, the division executed more than 870 contracts for PHHS.

This year the division expects to see the most change in the area of child protection. Last year several Minnesota cases resulting in the death of a child have brought closer scrutiny to the state's child protection system. The division will continue its strong partnership with the department in its shared mission of protecting the health and safety of children.



Kim Maki

Civil Division Head

Duluth Office:

Nick Campanario
 Jim Nephew
 Nora Sandstad
 Thomas Stanley
 Timothy Tysdal

Civil Division

Minnesota Statutes provide that the county attorney shall appear in all cases in which the county is a party and, further, shall give opinions and advice upon all matters in which the county is or may be interested. As one might imagine, this statutory edict makes for a substantial and varied workload for the Civil Division of the county attorney's office.

Kim Maki leads the civil division, which is responsible for advising county administration and all county departments regarding county business and governance issues. Division attorneys are assigned to the various county departments and develop expertise corresponding to the work of their assigned departments. The division also provides legal services to Arrowhead Regional Corrections (ARC).

The civil division attorneys are currently providing representation relative to major county projects that will likely come to fruition in 2015. The largest project is the county's consideration of a private party's request to develop a wetland bank near the Sax-Zim Bog area. The first phase of the development required the exchange of thousands of acres of tax-forfeited land in and near the bog for valuable forestry land located elsewhere. The land exchange was finalized in late 2014, and another smaller-scale land exchange will likely occur in 2015. The second and third phases of the development are the consideration of ditch abandonment and repair petitions and a wetland bank application. These phases will likely be completed in the first half of 2015. Ongoing monitoring of the wetland bank will continue for years to come. All told, this project has involved over half of the civil division staff and leadership from the Land and Minerals, Public Works, and Planning and Community Development Departments and the Auditor's and Assessor's Offices, as well as staff from the Board of Water and Soil Resources and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Another major project facing the county in 2015 is the sale of over 275 lakeshore lease lots. With the goal of returning these tax-forfeited lands to the tax rolls, these lots were identified, surveyed and appraised in 2014, and the first of many sales will occur in upcoming months. The civil division worked primarily with the Land and Minerals Department in preparing these lands for sale.

The Planning and Community Development Department is proposing a new county zoning ordinance in 2015, so the civil division will be instrumental in the review, revision, enactment and implementation of the new zoning ordinance. Additionally, the county's recently-enacted septic ordinance will be the subject of significant enforcement activities by the civil division in upcoming years.

In addition to the major projects the county will be undertaking and/or seeing to completion this year, members of the civil division will continue to perform their daily tasks. Looking to the future, the division will continue providing thoughtful, well-reasoned and timely legal advice and work product to facilitate efficient county operation.

Administration and Initiatives

Wade Backstrom

Office Administrator

Mark Stodghill

Projects and Initiatives
Coordinator

Duluth Courthouse Office:

Yvonne Kalin, Supervisor
Betty Christenson
Shirley Garden
Teresa Harries
Rachel Lambert
Diane Lundberg
Jody Messner
Sue Peterson
Angel Ricker
Corrie Voorhees
Teresa White
Cynthia Zuk

Duluth Government Services Office:

Mary Fruehauf, Supervisor
Jackie Calvert
Diane Eck
Laura Erickson
Tianna Zembo

Virginia Office:

Veronica Ratliff, Supervisor
Patti Everson
Tracy McDonald
Candy Nelson
Tammy Sundsahl

Hibbing Office:

Veronica Ratliff, Supervisor
Alaina Denny
Char Meinzer
Rachael Turk



Administration

Wade Backstrom leads the 27-member support staff and is responsible for human resource matters, technology management, and purchasing as steward of the county attorney’s \$7 million annual budget.

Three supervisors manage highly skilled clerical teams in four locations. They are responsible for the maintenance of our case management system and lead the system administrators group of the North East Minnesota Enforcement Safety Information System (NEMESIS), which consists of St. Louis, Carlton, Cook, Lake, and Koochiching counties.

INITIATIVES

Racial Justice Improvement Project

The St. Louis County Attorney’s Office continued to be a leading partner in the Racial Justice Improvement Project working to eliminate racial disparities in pre-trial decisions involving accused felons in the county. The project is sponsored by a grant from the American Bar Association and support from the Bureau of Justice.

Based upon data analyzed by Dr. Robert Weidner, a University of Minnesota-Duluth professor, the task force implemented a strategy and plan of action. “Our proposed policy reform that we have worked on here was to address the racial disparity, both perceived and real, by a comprehensive and racially valid method of enabling judges to make more fair and equitable decisions when setting bail and other conditions of pre-trial release,” St. Louis County Attorney Mark Rubin said.

The efforts have been complimented through a new Intensive Supervised Release initiative implemented by Arrowhead Regional Corrections and funded originally with assistance from St. Louis County Sheriff Ross Litman’s budget. If a decision is made to release someone on supervised release, they will now be subject to more intensive supervision.

Specialty court for military veterans is studied

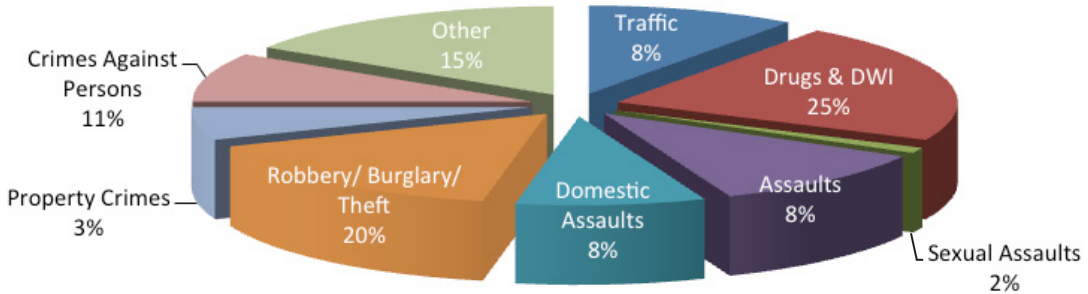
The county attorney’s office, 6th Judicial District Judge Dale Harris and others who work with and support military veterans in St. Louis County have been exploring the possible creation of a specialty court for men and women who have served our country and might have special needs as the result of chemical dependency, post traumatic stress disorders and other mental health issues.

County Attorney Mark Rubin assigned Mark Stodghill, a Vietnam veteran who serves as the office’s Projects & Initiatives coordinator, to monitor the court proceedings involving veterans in the event that a specialty court is created.

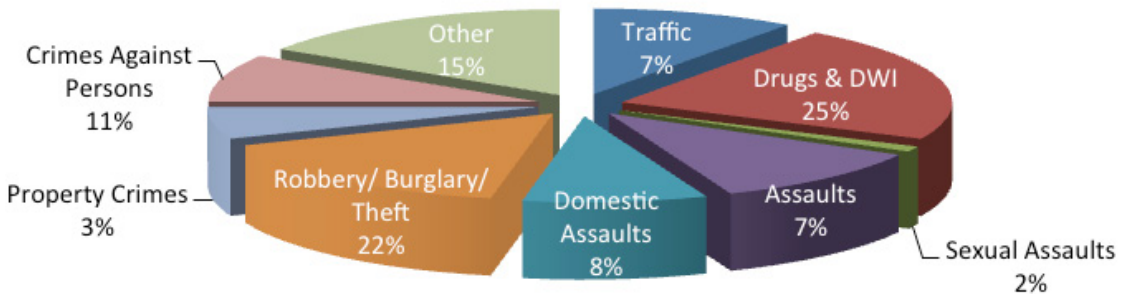
The consensus of those who provide services for military veterans is that there are currently not enough veterans appearing in court to support a full-fledged specialty Veterans Court, but Judge Harris has set aside one afternoon a month to preside over veterans’ cases.

Percent of Adult Referrals by Crime Type

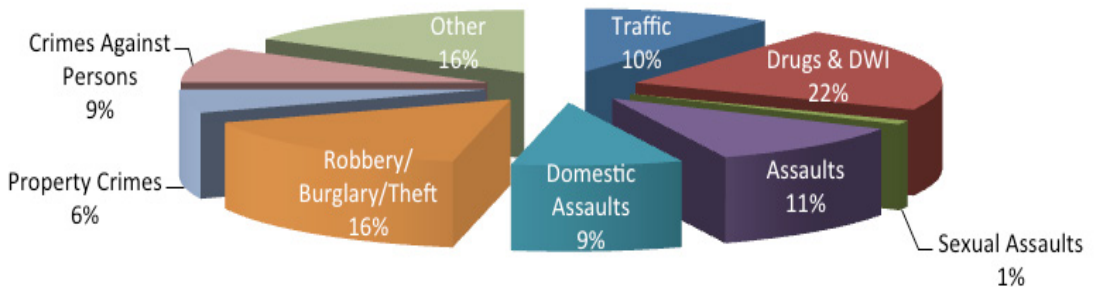
**Adult Referrals By Crime Type
2014**



**Adult Referrals By Crime Type
2013**

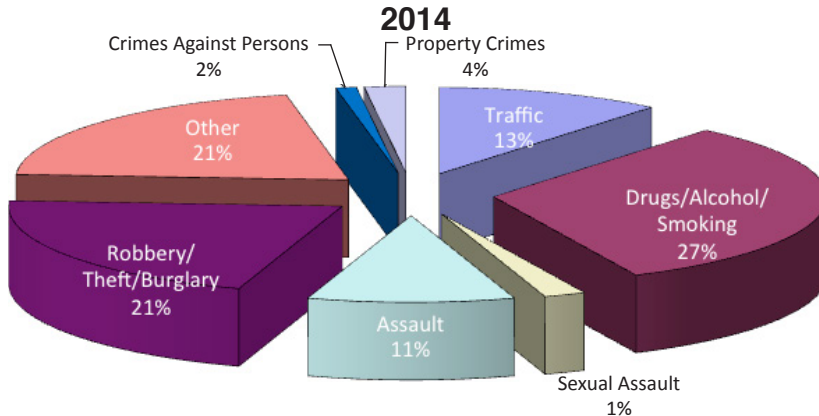


**Adult Referrals By Crime Type
2012**

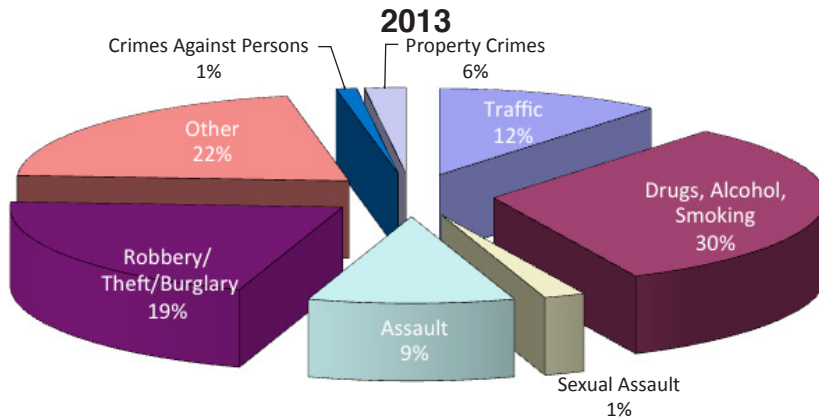


Percent of Juvenile Referrals by Crime Type

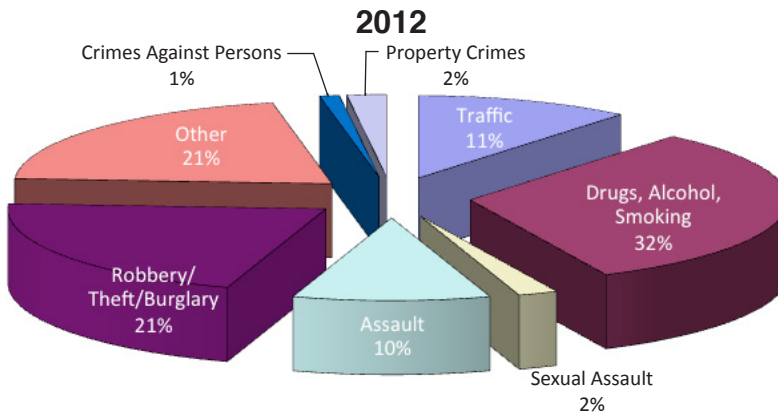
Juvenile Referrals By Crime Type



Juvenile Referrals By Crime Type

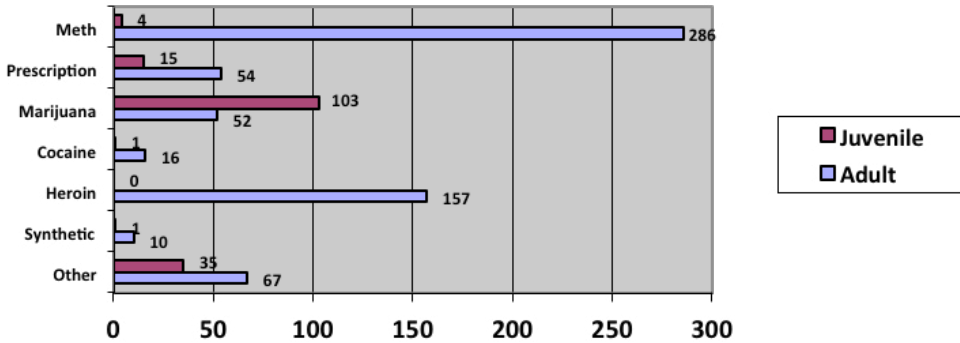


Juvenile Referrals By Crime Type

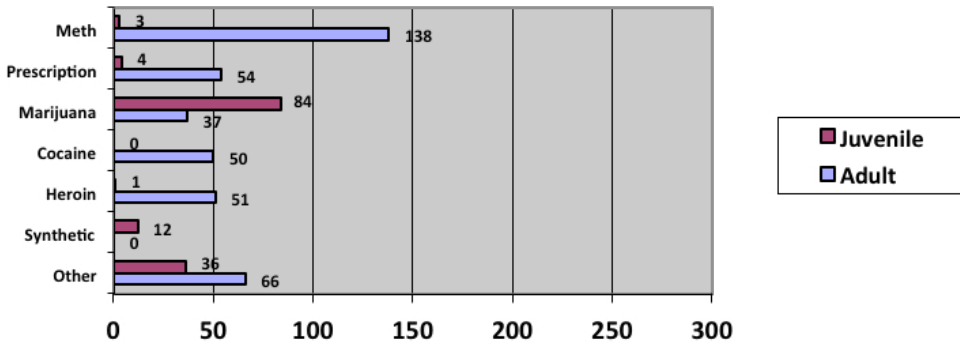


Drug Referrals By Drug Type

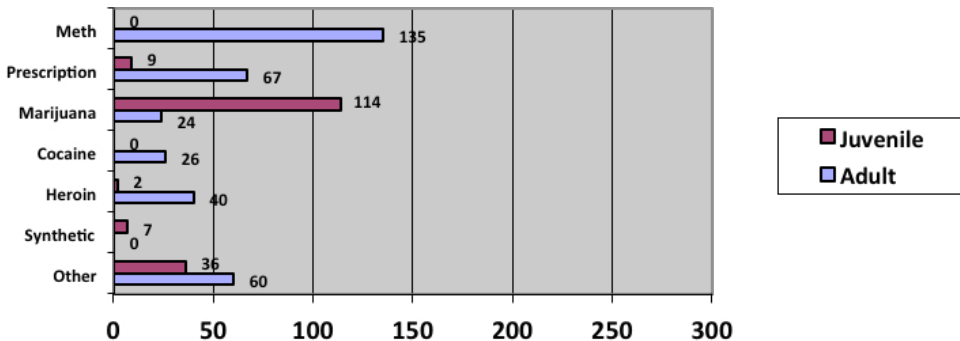
Drug Referrals by Drug Type 2014



Drug Referrals by Drug Type 2013



Drug Referrals by Drug Type 2012





Longtime St. Louis County Attorney Alan Mitchell died in a tragic accident in Arizona in March. Al headed the county attorney's office for 28 years. In August, 2014, the Alan Mitchell Law Library opened on the ground floor of the St. Louis County Courthouse in Duluth and was named in recognition of his dedicated service. Retired Assistant St. Louis County Attorney Vern Swanum worked for Mitchell for 25 years. "He expected high standards of those who worked for him, but even higher standards for himself," Swanum said. "He ran his office professionally, fairly, and totally without a political agenda. His goal was the pursuit of justice for all -- including the victims of crime, the safety of the public and protecting the constitutional rights of the citizen accused. His primary concern was serving the best interests of the citizens of the county."

Vice President Joe Biden visited with members of the St. Louis County Attorney's Office and others during an October trip to Duluth to speak about the Duluth Model's success in addressing domestic violence. Here Biden speaks with Patty Wheeler, Gary Bjorklund, Rebekka Stumme, Nancy Rubin, Mark Rubin, Jessica Fralich and U.S. Representative Rick Nolan.



*If there is to be peace in the world,
There must be peace in the nations.
If there is to be peace in the nations,
There must be peace in the cities.
If there is to be peace in the cities,
There must be peace between neighbors.
If there is to be peace between neighbors,
There must be peace in the home.
If there is to be peace in the home,
There must be peace in the heart.*
-- Lao Tzu, philosopher and poet of ancient China

This publication is made possible through the efforts of the St. Louis County Attorney's Office, in association with local law enforcement agencies. Funds utilized are converted property that aided in or was used in the commission of criminal offenses that occurred in St. Louis County. No taxpayer dollars have been expended in the printing of this publication.

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