

# METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT NASHVILLE-DAVIDSON COUNTY GENERAL SESSIONS COURT

## FISCAL REPORT

July 1, 2020—June 30, 2021



L to R: Judge Ana Escobar, Judge Rachel Bell, Judge Lynda Jones, Judge Melissa Blackburn, Judge William Higgins, Presiding Judge Sam Coleman, Judge John Aaron Holt, Judge Allegra Walker, Judge Dianne Turner, Judge Michael Mondelli, Judge Gale Robinson

## A YEAR OF COVID-19 CHALLENGES

Fiscal Year 20-21 marked a year of challenges to the operation of the General Sessions Court brought on by the global COVID-19 pandemic. Under the mandate of the Tennessee Supreme Court, our court remained open but conducted business within certain constraints. Among other things, in-person hearings were suspended or curtailed; remote or video conference hearings were utilized; mask mandates were imposed; social distancing was enforced; courtroom capacity restrictions were followed; docket sizes were limited; an eviction moratorium prevailed; and deadlines were extended. Through it all, however, our judges ensured that core constitutional functions and rights were protected.

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## The Internet

Information regarding all services of the General Sessions Court can be found on-line at

[www.gscourt.nashville.gov](http://www.gscourt.nashville.gov).

For information regarding civil cases, the address is

[www.circuitclerk.nashville.gov](http://www.circuitclerk.nashville.gov).

For information regarding criminal matters, the address is

[www.ccc.nashville.gov](http://www.ccc.nashville.gov).

From there, you can link to such topics as court dockets, judges' schedules, local rules, fees and downloadable forms.



### Nashville-Davidson County General Sessions Court Administration Office

Justice A.A. Birch Building  
408 2nd Avenue North, Suite 1140  
P.O. Box 196300  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219

Phone: (615) 862-8317

### Recovery Court

Justice A.A. Birch Building  
408 2nd Avenue North  
P.O. Box 196300  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219

Phone: (615) 862-4241

### Mental Health & Veterans Court

Ben West Building  
100 James Robertson Parkway  
Suite 100  
P.O. Box 196300  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219

Phone: (615) 862-8320

### Night Court Magistrate's Office

Downtown Detention Center  
440 3rd Avenue North,  
Nashville, Tennessee 37201

Phone: (615) 862-8304

### Court Language Interpretations

Justice A.A. Birch Building  
408 2nd Avenue North, Suite 1140  
P.O. Box 196300  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219

Phone: (615) 862-8335

### Traffic Safety Education Department

Justice A.A. Birch Building  
408 2nd Avenue North, Suite 1130  
P.O. Box 196300  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219

Phone: (615) 862-8345

### Probation Department

Ben West Building  
100 James Robertson Parkway  
Suite 10  
P.O. Box 196300  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219

Phone: (615) 862-8380

Front Cover Photo:  
courtesy of Gary Layda

### Our Address:

General Sessions Court  
Justice A.A. Birch  
408 2nd Ave. N.  
P.O. Box 196300  
Nashville, TN 37219

Phone: (615) 862-8317

### WEB ADDRESS:

[WWW.GSCOURT.NASHVILLE.GOV](http://WWW.GSCOURT.NASHVILLE.GOV)

### OTHER RELATED DEPARTMENTS

Traffic Violations Bureau	(615) 862-5222
Criminal Court Clerk's Office	(615) 862-5601
Civil Court Clerk's Office	(615) 862-5195
Metro Environmental Court	(615) 862-6195
Codes Warrant Docket	(615) 862-6195
Codes Citation Docket	(615) 862-5222
Sheriff's Department	(615) 862-8170
District Attorney General's Office	(615) 862-5500
Public Defender's Office	(615) 862-5730



To request an accommodation, call (615) 862-5199



# Court Jurisdiction

The Metropolitan General Sessions Court of Nashville-Davidson County serves as a very important “spoke in the wheel” as the basic foundation in the local justice system. It is a high volume limited jurisdiction Court that hears civil, misdemeanor, felony, traffic, environmental, and metropolitan ordinance violations. This court is served by 11 judges that are elected to an eight year term. There are also 5 full time, 5 power shift and 6 part time law-trained Judicial Magistrates, that handle the probable cause hearings in the issuance of a criminal warrant and 1 referee that handles the environmental cases and other non-traffic metro ordinance violations. For a majority of the citizens, this level of court will be their only encounter with the state’s justice system. Consequently, it has been frequently described as “the court of first resort.” The list below shows the area of law under the court’s jurisdiction.

- **Criminal**—Cases in which the applicable penalty is no more than 11 months, 29 days; Preliminary Hearing; Amount and conditions of all appearance bonds; Forfeiture of property used in commission of crime; Issuance of search warrants.
- **Civil**—Civil warrants with a jurisdictional limit of \$25,000 and monetary jurisdiction is unlimited in detainer actions; Orders of Protection; Mental Health (involuntary committal); Tuberculosis Treatment (Non-Compliance).
- **Environmental**—Animal control, Housing code violations and Building code violations.
- **Metro Ordinance**—Traffic law violations; All other county ordinance violations.



## The Dockets

The Metropolitan General Sessions Court system is committed to excellence in administering justice and is a contributing partner working toward a safe and vital community in Nashville-Davidson County. The Court handles a vast array of cases such as traffic offenses, preliminary hearings on felony and misdemeanor cases, mental health, various alcohol and drug related cases and civil related cases up to \$25,000. It is estimated that the General Sessions Court system processed over 200,000 litigants in FY 2021. The following is a general overview of the docket system handled by the Court:

- \* Criminal Bond
- \* Felony/Misdemeanor
- \* Daily Traffic
- \* Daily Civil
- \* Daily Driver License/ Misdemeanor
- \* Daily Orders of Protection
- \* Domestic Violence
- \* Environmental
- \* Emergency Committals
- \* Special Committals
- \* State Traffic
- \* Felony Drug
- \* Mental Health / Veterans Court
- \* Recovery Court
- \* Community Court
- \* Cherished Hearts
- \* Homeless Court

Caseload Overview	FY 2020	FY 2021
Criminal Warrants/Citations	35,576	35,576
Traffic—Metro/State	69,140	62,089
Mental Health Committals	9,369	8,801
Civil	38,072	23,727
Orders of Protection	3,155	3,169
Metro & Environmental	3,769	2,435
<b>Totals</b>	<b>159,081</b>	<b>116,425</b>

Source: Criminal Justice Planning Office, Criminal & Civil Clerk’s Offices

## CREDITS

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Nashville, TN 37219

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# General Sessions Court Judges



Judge Gale Robinson  
Division I



Judge Melissa Blackburn  
Division II

## Administrative Staff

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Tamara Lowin  
Division XI  
Suite 3150  
Phone: (615) 880-3683



Judge Ana L. Escobar  
Division III



Judge Allegra Walker  
Division IV



Judge Dianne Turner  
Division V



Judge Michael F. Mondelli  
Division VI



Judge William E. Higgins  
Division VII



Judge Rachel L. Bell  
Division VIII



Judge Lynda Jones  
Division IX



Judge Sam Coleman  
Division X



Judge John Aaron Holt  
Division XI

Central Address for All Judges: Justice A.A. Birch Building,  
408 2nd Ave. N., P.O. Box 196300, Nashville, TN 37219



### Chief Justice Adolpho A. Birch, Jr.

Former Chief Justice A. A. Birch, Jr. is described by many as a trailblazer in the legal profession, a pioneering African-American jurist and scholar. Throughout his legal career, Justice Birch maintained a courageous voice and was a zealous advocate for civil rights. He often provided fairness and equality in legal access and treatment of criminal defendants.

Before his judicial career, in the early 1960s, along with maintaining a private law practice, Justice Birch provided volunteer legal services and representation for civil rights activists who had been arrested for conducting or participating in acts of segregated lunch counters. From this work, Justice Birch became a part-time public defender and would go on to become the first African-American to work as a prosecutor in Davidson County.

Justice Birch began his judicial career in 1969 as a General Sessions Court Judge in Davidson County and was the first African-American, and only Tennessee judge, to have served at every level of the state judicial system - general sessions, criminal trial, criminal appeals and the State of Tennessee Supreme Court.

During his service on the State of Tennessee Supreme Court, he became the first African-American to serve as Chief Justice, serving in that capacity from May 1974 - July 1977. During his tenure on the bench he received many awards and honors including the prestigious William H. Hoyle Award from the National Bar Association's Judicial Council, the Barbara Jordan Award from the International Phi Alpha Delta Law Fraternity and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Civil Liberties Union of Tennessee. Justice Birch retired in 2006, after serving 37 years on the bench and passed away on August 25, 2011.

This statue was dedicated to honor a lifetime of achievement by Justice A. A. Birch, Jr. that was inspired by an enduring commitment to equality, justice and service to all the citizens of Nashville, Davidson County and the State of Tennessee.

Erected on August 27, 2014



# Mental Health Court

For more than ten years, the Davidson County Mental Health Court has provided crucial support and assistance to some of Nashville's most vulnerable citizens.

One of the first mental health courts established in the United States, the Davidson County Court has been on the leading edge of working with those in our community who are dealing with mental health challenges. Judge Melissa Blackburn presides over the court and oversees a staff of specialists trained to address the particular needs of court participants. During the past year, 229 people were evaluated by Mental Health Court specialists to determine their eligibility for the program with 62 new participants admitted. For the 2019 Fiscal Year, 88% of successful program graduates did not re-offend and did not return to involvement with the criminal justice system.

Individuals participating in the specialized court program may be on probation or on a diversion program for criminal charges. Potential clients are screened by mental health professionals to determine their compatibility for the program and, if they are accepted, the period of supervision typically lasts eleven months. More severe cases may remain within the program for a longer period of supervision. Court staff works on a routine basis to ensure compliance, assist in housing, monitor treatment for substance and alcohol abuse and provide medical services with a goal of establishing stability needed to be a contributing member of the community.

The court currently supervises more than two hundred participants, allowing them a fresh start and an opportunity to succeed in life.

For Fiscal Year 2017, Mayor Megan Berry included two new positions to be funded by the Metropolitan Government of Nashville-Davidson County in her budget proposal to the Metro Council. The Council approved these new positions, allowing the Mental Health Court to expand its scope of services and increase the number of Nashvillians

served per year.

When we consider difficulties with increased incarceration and the constraints budget reductions placed on our justice and mental health systems, innovation in our approach is critical. The Davidson County Mental Health Court is meeting these challenges and providing a vital service to the community.

**Judge**—Melissa Blackburn, Division II (2)

**Administrative Assistant:**

Katie Torrence

**Director:**

Mark Winslow

**Assistant Director:**

Patricia Breeding

Michael Messmer

**Administrative Assistant:**

Cynthia Nelson

**Client Service Specialists**

Erica Gehle

Derek DeSha

Mary Grace Capps

Samantha Keeling

Valerie Fisher

**Court Officers:**

Lovie Hurt Jr.

Pat Stockdale



Cases Referred:	137
Cases Accepted:	58
Graduates:	41
Graduate Success Rate:	68%
Court Costs Waived:	\$49,821

# Veterans Court

In 2014, Davidson County was awarded a three-year implementation grant from the United States Department of Justice through the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. The purpose is to fund operation of a fully accredited specialty court tasked with serving Nashville's Veterans. During the past year, forty-two Veterans were evaluated by Veterans Court specialists and thirty-six were admitted into the program.

Veterans specialty courts originated in Buffalo, NY beginning in 2008. Since then, dozens of courts have been established across the United States to assist with the unique difficulties of our service veterans. Judge Melissa Blackburn of General Sessions Division II presides over the court and supervises its operations.

Through a structured program administered by the court, eligible veterans can find stability and new purpose to be a contributor to the community. Benefits offered to assist veterans include mental health evaluation, alcohol/substance abuse assistance and supervision by client specialists assigned to work on their particular needs. Veterans agree to participate as a condition of probation or on a diversion program for criminal charges. For the FY 2021 Fiscal Year, 92% of Veterans Court program graduates did not re-offend.

The court works in partnership with metro and state government agencies and mental health providers, as well as veterans outreach and advocacy groups. Together, they form a support system that gives eligible veterans an opportunity to address issues brought about by their military service.

Beginning in Fiscal Year 2017 and continuing in 2021, the State of Tennessee included funding of Veterans Courts in the annual budget. The Davidson County Veterans Court was fortunate to be one of the courts selected to receive a portion of the state's funding. As a result of this

support, 54 new veterans were supported and received the assistance they needed to return to life as a productive citizen.

In the new battlefields America faces, those in military service are exposed to warfare and experiences never previously encountered. Growing numbers of veterans returning from service face specific mental challenges as a result of fighting to defend our nation in an evolving and dangerous world. The methods by which we work to return them to full participation in society are crucial and the Davidson County Veterans Court is employing these new methods. It is the mission of the court to fulfill our nation's commitment to the men and women who chose to defend our way of life.

**ALL Armed Forces**



**Serving:**

Cases Referred:	33
Cases Accepted:	21
Graduates:	33
Graduate Success Rate:	85%
Court Costs Waived:	\$16,045



## Recovery Court

The mission of the General Sessions Recovery Court is to promote judicial intervention and rehabilitation to substance abuse offenders to reduce drug related crimes among repeat offenders and to improve the life of the offender, thereby enhancing the quality of life for their families and community.

The Davidson County General Sessions Recovery Court is for legally involved individuals suffering from substance use disorder who are high risk of re-offending due to their substance use. Recovery Court was created to provide free services to participants while under court supervision for criminal offenses. The Honorable Judge Gale Robinson and his Recovery Court Staff, Tennessee Recovery Foundation, Public Defenders Office, District Attorney's Office, and numerous partner agencies make up the support system for the Recovery Court. Funded by Davidson County Metropolitan Government and the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services through the Tennessee Recovery Foundation, the Court provides many services needed for positive reintegration into the community.

Recovery Court accepts candidates who can be supervised under bond conditions prior to any conviction. Upon successful completion of Recovery Court, these open charges are able to be dismissed or otherwise disposed of at the District Attorney's Office discretion. Recovery Court also accepts criminal court, community corrections and General Sessions probation cases. The Court requires participants to complete five program phases with a supervision period of about 18 months depending on the participant's clinical or criminogenic needs. Each phase addresses specific areas of the participant's life to support the recovery maintenance and societal reintegration into their community.

Program Manager Lauren Berens, Probation Officers Terena Moore, Kate Ramsaur, and Case Manager Leticia Lozano supervise participants to ensure court-ordered requirements are met. Services provided include substance use treatment and medication assisted treatment as clinically assessed, behavioral health services as clinically assessed, a minimum of 8 hours of educational and vocational advancement, HiSet preparations and testing, housing and transportation referrals and assistance, drug and alcohol testing, employment and community service requirements and referrals for any other component in which our Probation Officers and the Treatment team recommend.

While participating in Recovery Court, participants attend office visits with their probation officer at a minimum of once per month to have a one on one check in and provide a safe space in

the legal arena for participants to visit. Additionally, Recovery Court staff complete home and employment visits for all participants on a monthly basis. These visits allow the probation officer to be further informed on the participant support systems and provides the participant the opportunity to communicate with their probation office on their own space. Building a strong, safe relationship with participants is a main aspect in the success of the Recovery Court model.

Recovery Court has multiple graduations each year signifying participants' achievement of meeting all treatment goals and court ordered requirements. Graduation confirms the participant is prepared to reenter their community in recovery and independent of legal involvement and substance use disorder. All graduating participants are invited to return to the program to provide support to current participants or seek assistance from the Court and partnering agencies if additional services are required or requested.

Total Candidates Screened:	214
Accepted:	84
Graduated:	34
Denied:	130
Number of random drug/alcohol screens completed:	3,908
100% of all participants suffer from Severe Substance Use Disorder and prior to admission to Recovery Court were abusing alcohol/illegal/non-prescribed substances on a <b>daily basis</b> .	



## Environmental Court

When disputes arise over the enforcement of the Davidson County Metropolitan Code of Laws and Regulations they are brought to the Environmental Court, a division of the General Sessions Court. This docket was created in 2001 to address Metro Code violations pertaining to buildings, trash, debris in neighborhoods and business sites, and short term rental violations. This court also enforces leash law violations, nuisance complaints about dog barking, and at large or vicious dogs. Defendants found guilty of violations of the Metro Code of Laws are liable for court costs and can be subject to fines of \$50 per day for every day the property remains in violation. The court may also order the defendant to spend time in jail for a maximum of ten days. Once a warrant has been served, the defendant is responsible for all costs, including any

fines. The Codes Department cannot waive court costs, assessed fines or release any liens assessed by the court to recover these costs. The court meets each Tuesday with three (3) dockets at 9:00 am, 10:00 am and 11:00 am in courtroom 3B at the Justice A.A. Birch Building (408 2nd Ave. North). The 9:00 am docket handles metro codes cases. The 11:00 AM Metro Citation Docket, handles citations written by departments such as, Police Alarms, Fire, Water, Codes and Health, Emissions, Beer Board, Traffic And Parking Commission and Animal Control. Special hearings are conducted on Friday at 10:00 am & 1:00 pm. The court is presided by current General Sessions Court Division IV-Judge Allegra Walker and Referee Jim Todd, who served in that capacity for 10 years through May, 2017. Judge Walker appointed John Manson to serve as Referee effective June, 2017. In September 2017, Judge Walker appointed Renard Hirsch to replace John Manson.



# Domestic Violence Court

In response to a city-wide Domestic Violence Safety Assessment, the Davidson County General Sessions Court's docket structure was reorganized in 2014 to allow for a dedicated Domestic Violence Court. While the Court has been hearing cases involving Domestic Violence with Judge Gale Robinson presiding over such dockets for more than 24 years, the current docket structure provides an efficient and timely processing of cases involving domestic

violence, and simplifies the court process for all parties involved.

All Orders of Protection and criminal cases involving domestic violence in the General Sessions Court are docketed in the dedicated Domestic Violence Court which operates daily in Courtroom 4B and 4C of the Justice A.A. Birch Building. The three (3) judges assigned to preside over the dedicated Domestic Violence Court on a rotating basis are Gale Robinson and Allegra Walker and Ana L. Escobar. The Criminal Court Clerks for Domestic Violence docket preparation is Matthew Du, Mary McKinnie, and Malcom Nevils.

The dedicated Domestic Violence Court began operation on September 2, 2014.



# CHERISHED H.E.A.R.T.S.

Healing Enslaved and Repressed Trafficking Survivors

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING INTERVENTION COURT

In February 2016, Assistant District Attorneys Tammy Meade and Deb Smith, under the leadership of District Attorney General Glenn Funk, created an innovative intervention court titled Cherished H.E.A.R.T.S. This court was created in response to a clear social issue where survivors of human trafficking were caught in a criminal cycle due to their traumatic experiences, criminal records and, for some, substance abuse disorder. This court is open to all women, men and transgendered survivors of human trafficking and is one of the few trafficking courts in the country. The program is voluntary and participants agree to a twenty four month supervision. When the survivor successfully completes the program, their offense(s) may be dismissed and expunged at no expense.

The Honorable Judge Ana L. Escobar presides over Cherished H.E.A.R.T.S. She has partnered with the Tennessee Recovery Foundation, End Slavery Tennessee, The Office of Family Safety and the General Sessions Probation Department. The Da-

vidson County Drug Court Foundation and End Slavery Tennessee help provide safe housing, substance abuse treatment and support, trauma and mental health counseling, medical treatment, assistance in receiving government aid, and employment assistance all at no cost to the survivor. Melanie Taylor, the Program Manager, and the General Sessions Probation Department provides the supervision of program compliance and helps coordinate court requirements, community partners, incentives and sanctions. Cherished H.E.A.R.T.S. is partnered with End Slavery Tennessee, the Davidson County Attorney General's Office, the Public Defender's Office, the Office of Family Safety, Averhealth, Davidson County Criminal Court Clerk, Rest Stop, Mending Hearts, The Next Door, Renewal House, Independence Again, Emanuel House and others to further support participants in the program.

While in Cherished H.E.A.R.T.S., survivors attend court regularly and complete substance abuse and mental health treatment as clinically recommended. Participants gain employ-

ment and receive assistance with physical health needs and any other needs identified are attempted to be met through our thorough case management. Consistent support is crucial to creating self-worth as survivors move toward a crime free and independent lifestyle.



### FY 2020-21

Number of Drug Tests	% Positive
441	4

### FY 2020-21

Candidates Screened for Cherished Hearts	10
Candidates Denied for Cherished Hearts	2
Candidates Accepted into Cherished Hearts	8
Cherished Hearts Graduates	2
Cherished Hearts Unsuccessful Terminations	4





# General Sessions Music City Community Court, Division VIII (8)

Est. 2012 - 1<sup>st</sup> in the State - Nashville, Davidson Co., TN

2020-2021 Annual Report

“Justice does **NOT** stop at the courthouse steps.”<sup>®</sup>



## Judge Rachel L. Bell,

Founder & Presiding Judge

Since its inception in 2012, the Court has a mission centered to create programs focused on preventative, restorative and diversionary justice. Its vision is to do all it can to break the playground to prison pipeline; to restore and rehabilitate lives by using its power and resources to move the needle for marginalized people.

## C.A.R.E. 2020-2021

Creating Avenues for Restoration & Empowerment  
Diversionary Court for Ages 18-30

The C.A.R.E. Diversionary Court launched in 2020 and works to emphasize the ways crime

harms relationships in the community and brings together the people most impacted by the crime to resolve it. Offenders ages 18-30 are still forming their cognitive ability and usually entering the criminal justice system for the first time. Participants are given a second chance and the ability to restore the victim and be held accountable. Successful participants receive individualized case management and after completion of the 5 Phase Program their charges are dismissed and expunged.

**ASPIRE** 6-12 month aftercare program designed to assist C.A.R.E. graduates with mentorship and guidance in collaboration with other providers and resources to ensure sustainability in their individualized success.

**RESTORE** Saturday Dockets: Community Service Work Return Docket, Expungement & Legal Clinic, Pro Se Indigency Docket

Since 2012, we have assisted **14,097 participants** with the necessary steps to gain access to getting their records expunged, restoring their right to vote, reinstating their drivers license, adequate housing and quality wage jobs.

**Saturday Community Service Return Docket** [2020-2021] Participants: 39, Hours Worked: 78, Taxpayer Money Saved: \$1,833

Since 2013, **1,234 participants** have served **6,014 hours** to save tax payers **\$129,490.78**

**Expungement/Legal Clinic & Resource Fairs** [2020-2021] Participants: 64

Since 2014, we have hosted **29 clinics**, serving **2,115 participants**.

**Indigency Motion Docket** [2020-2021] Participants: 884, Cases: 6,998

Since 2015, we have reviewed **66,489 cases** to help **10,748 participants** and waived **\$7,050,938.92** in court costs, fines, and fees.

Visit us at <https://gscourt.nashville.gov/community-court/> or on [f @musiccitycommunitycourt/](https://www.facebook.com/musiccitycommunitycourt/)



SAT. JULY 18, @ 10:00 A.M.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM & CANNABIS

Nashville DA to stop prosecuting minor marijuana possession offenses immediately



Judge Bell has also established a PODCAST called THE FOLLOW-UP where she brings on guests to provide valuable information on restorative justice and criminal justice reform.



SAT. AUGUST 1st - 10:00 a.m.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM & JUVENILE COURT



SAT. AUGUST 8th - 10:00 a.m.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURT 'Behind Closed Doors'



SAT. OCT. 10th - 10:00 a.m.

MENTAL HEALTH & ADDICTION - Part 1 'Talk it OUT!'



**MLK Weekend** FREE FOOD BOX & HYGIENE KIT GIVE-AWAY Saturday, January 16, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

**DRIVE-THRU FOOD DISTRIBUTION**

McGruder Center, 2013 25th Ave. Nash, TN 37208

**JUNETEENTH FREEDOM-A-THON** Expungement/Legal Clinic, Indigency Docket & Resource Fair Saturday, June 19, 2021 at 9:00 AM with Judge Rachel L. Bell and David Lantry, Criminal Court Clerk

**REGISTRATION REQUIRED** June 18, 2021 at 2:00 PM

Check-In: 9:00 AM - 9:30 AM, Clinic Docket: 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM, Indigency Docket: 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM

Dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and the Nashville Tornado, we had to make some adjustments with the RESTORE Court. Courts were closed most of 2020 and reopened in 2021. We were able to host our Annual MLK Day and our Juneteenth Freedom-A-Thon. We had a great turn out and were pleased to get back into the Bordeaux North Community Justice Center that is located in the heart of Zip Code 37208 at the McGruder Family Resource Center.





The L.E.G.A.C.Y. Housing Resource Diversionary Court & Program (HRDC) was developed to assist the landlord and tenant with a streamlined way to navigate the current pandemic, particularly those whose income was affected directly by COVID-19 resulting in the inability to receive or pay rent. The court's innovations have received local and national attention.

July 21, 2021: Judge Rachel L. Bell presents at the White House Eviction Prevention Summit



July 30, 2021:  
Judge Rachel L. Bell featured Nationally on MSNBC's Andrea Mitchell Show with Julian Castro, former Secretary of HUD.

**OUR PREVENTATIVE JUSTICE PROGRAMS:**

These programs were created to assist MNPS with programming geared to prepare our children to prevent going from the playground to the prison pipeline. Our programs are hosted during MNPS- Spring, Summer and Fall Breaks.



A summer literacy program for MNPS Rising 1st - 4th Graders.  
For MNPS students that are in the Youth Court program to learn about the three branches of our Davidson County Metropolitan Government.  
A National Safety Council Defensive Driver Class for 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade MNPS students.

OUR NON-PROFIT:



**L.E.G.A.C.Y. HRDC [2021]**  
Participants: 1,292  
Cases: 2,505

Since February of this year (2021), the L.E.G.A.C.Y. Housing Resource Diversionary Court, in partnership with the MAC HOPE Program and United Way's CARES grant funding, has **settled more than 1,000 cases** by receiving federal funds to the tune of **\$5,927,877.43** into the hands of landlords to help Nashville tenants keep a roof over their heads during this crisis.

# Homeless Court

The Metropolitan Nashville-Davidson County General Sessions Courts along with several non-profits and Baker Donelson Legal Clinic have launched the Nashville Homeless Court program to assist our homeless. NHC is a diversionary court that routes individuals who struggle with homelessness out of the traditional legal outcomes of convictions, incarceration, and probation and toward connection with service providers that can further assist with removing barriers to employment and housing. Judge Lynda Jones is the Homeless Court Presiding Judge. Judges Blackburn, Coleman and Higgins also assisted.

- Eligible Charges:**  
The charges eligible to go to the new Homeless Court include  
Criminal Trespass (T.C.A. §39-14-405)  
Trespass - Motor Vehicles (T.C.A. §39-14-407)  
Obstruction of a Passageway (T.C.A. §39-17-307)  
Disorderly Conduct (T.C.A. §39-17-305)  
Public Intoxication (T.C.A. §39-17-310)  
Open Container Violation (T.C.A. §55-10-416)  
Criminal Littering (T.C.A. §39-14-504)  
Unlawful Possession of Drug Paraphernalia (T.C.A. §39-17-425)  
Possession of a Legend Drug without a Prescription (T.C.A. §53-10- 105)  
Aggressive Panhandling (first and second offenses) (T.C.A. §39-17- 313)



Judge Lynda Jones (right) presiding over the Homeless Court docket at Room in the Inn



Total Candidates FY 2020-2021	
Candidates Screened	416
Candidates Accepted	33



# Judicial Magistrates

Five judicial magistrates—each possessing the qualifications of a judge—comprise what is known collectively as “Night Court,” a viable and productive extension of the General Sessions Court. The identifying label is derived from the fact that the Magistrates preside over proceedings that take place after normal business hours. But it is misleading in that the panel is actually on duty 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, serving a broad range of functions relevant to the criminal justice process.

In addition to their other job responsibilities, the magistrates:

- \* Conduct probable cause hearings, issue warrants and set bail bonds in criminal cases
- \* Determine probable cause for judicial committals from county psychiatric facilities
- \* Issue Ex Parte Orders of Protection, as well as warrants for violations of such orders
- \* Issue property seizure warrants upon probable cause

Each magistrate is appointed by the court for a one-year term that dictates seven-day work weeks and alternating eight-hour work shifts.



**Magistrate**  
Bruce Kessler



**Magistrate**  
Carolyn Piphus



**Magistrate**  
John Manson



**Magistrate**  
Steve Holzapfel



**Magistrate**  
Evan Harris

## Night Court Activity

	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21
Warrants & Summons Issued	28,971	24,543
Conditions of Release / Orders	39,009	31,749
Emergency Committals	9,369	8,801
Mittimus of Appearance	41,473	34,641
Ex Parte Orders of Protection	3,155	3,169
Parole Violations	135	126
Orders of Protection Violations	649	672
Property Seizure Hearings	317	201
Search Warrants	1,410	1,612

Source: Criminal Justice Planning Office, Criminal & Civil Clerk's Offices

**Night Court  
Magistrate's Office**  
440 3rd Avenue North  
Nashville, TN 37201  
Phone: (615) 862-8304

**Power Shift  
Magistrates**  
Jeffrey Daigle  
Chris Hofstetter  
Dan Masten  
Kyle Parks  
Marie Stacey

**Part-Time  
Magistrates**  
Umeka Foreman  
Edward Hastings  
Tim Lee  
Chelsea Nicholson  
Nicholas Waite

# Court Information Technology—Fiscal Year Report (July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021)

**Software Support:** Microsoft, Oracle, Adobe, Power Builder Custom Applications, Solar Winds and Court Smart Digital, CISCO and ZOOM.

**Hardware Support:** Dell (Desktop/Laptop), CISCO, COURT SMART, RJ Young Copier/Printer/Scanner/Fax, Cell Phones and Tablets.

**Helpdesk Phone Number**

**(615) 880-3680**

Category	2020	2021
Phone Calls	4,487	1,149
Emails	13,246	4,518
Requests	1,233	287
<b>Totals</b>	<b>18,966</b>	<b>5,954</b>



**Brad Freeman**  
Information  
Systems Advisor



**Terry Hanserd**  
I.S. Application  
Analyst



**Court Administrator**  
Kyle Sowell

## Court Administration Office

According to the Metro Charter, the office of the Court Administrator assists the presiding judge with the improvement in the efficiency and operation of the Metropolitan General Sessions Court. These duties, include but are not limited to, the following: daily operations, budget and fiscal management, personnel management, office automation management, manage multiple courtrooms' digital recording system, assist in resolving court facility issues, court interpretative services coordination, manage supplemental court security personnel and preparation of the annual report.

### Overview of Principal Services

Daily manage the Court's budget for FY 2021 of \$12,763,000 with a total of 147 court personnel review, oversee, and/or process various Metro R-12 Business system transactions:

- Over 2,211 payment transactions totaling over \$762,500

- Over 1,600 revenue transactions totaling over \$1 million
- Over 2000 personnel cost transactions (Payroll & Benefits) totaling over \$11,550,000.
- The estimated number of total phone calls handled in 2020-21 by all services: Over 12,000
- Manage Master Calendar for all Courtrooms for special hearings/events: 382
- The number of web e-mails received from the public and acted upon: 199
- The number of General Services work orders submitted by the Court Administration office: 114



**Assistant to the Administrator**  
Gina Fox



**Finance Officer**  
Tadayoshi Kawawa

**Administrative Assistant**  
Angie Von Mann

**Office Support for Magistrates Night Court**  
Darren Varnado

## Language Interpretations

Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 41 was promulgated to assist the courts in providing equal access to participants who have limited ability to speak or understand the English language. It is the responsibility of the court to determine whether a participant in a legal proceeding has limited ability to understand and communicate in English. For the fiscal year 2020-2021, the General Sessions Court's language interpreter coordinator scheduled 3,511 total court interpretations with 3,258 of those requiring Spanish interpretations. This computes to an average of 293 court interpretations

monthly. The predominant foreign languages involved include Spanish, Arabic, Vietnamese, Laotian, Korean, Chinese, Kurdish and Somalian.

The number of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations made: 26

- \* 12 Criminal docket related
- \* 8 Civil, Traffic School/other
- \* 6 Order of Protection related



**Court Interpreter Coordinator**  
Delma Aguilar

## Court Security

Each "in-courtroom" security officer maintains order and decorum in the courtroom at all times and prevents unauthorized entry into the private secured hallways adjacent to the courtrooms.

- \* Security related incidents: 19
- \* Medical related incidents: 7
- \* Defendants taken in custody for Outstanding Warrants: 148



**Security Officer Coordinator**  
Sherman Cecil

**Assistant Security Officer Coordinator**  
Chris Edmondson

### Courtroom Security Officers

Joseph Farnsworth	Torrian Hall
Monica Johnson	James Kelly
John A. Kent	Jason L. Stack
Gabriel Santiago	William Stevenson
Patrick Wood	Robert Virga



### Our Address:

General Sessions Court  
Administration Office  
Justice A.A. Birch  
408 2nd Ave. N., Suite 1140  
P.O. Box 196300  
Nashville, TN 37219  
Phone: (615) 862-8317

WEB: WWW.GSCOURT.NASHVILLE.GOV





Johnetta Nelson  
Director

# Traffic Safety Education Fiscal Year Report: 7/1/20—6/30/2021

General Sessions Traffic Education - Johnetta Nelson, Director

General Sessions Traffic Education

Prepared by: Johnetta Nelson, Director & Shannon Hodge, Supervisor

## Performance

Nashville's Traffic Safety Education Program continues to outperform other municipalities. In 2018, our agency had the honor of being awarded the Training Center of the Year for our Defensive Driving Course (DDC) Online by the National Safety Council (NSC). Another prestigious award was given to the agency as the 2018 Training Center of the Year Multiple Program recognizing the tremendous efforts poured into numerous courses offered at the General Sessions Court Traffic Safety Education Program. As the staff continues to work closely with the National Safety Council, we're hopeful that the Fiscal Year

2020-2021 awards will include our agency and further promote the hard-work and dedication of our staff. The staff at the Traffic Safety Education Program have been diligent in accommodating the needs of those wanting to attend classes during these unchartered times. The staff has maintained great perseverance and professionalism.

## Traffic School Education Department Staff:

**Director** - Johnetta Nelson

**Supervisor** - Shannon Hodge

**Administrative Enrollment Staff** - Betty Bailey, Candy Catalan, and Julia Kozeka

**Traffic School Instructors** - Gloria Bishop, Wayne Curry, Ron Elliott, Chris Perry, and Clarence Tangney

## Gross revenues for FY 20/21

\$609,929.00

**Total Enrollments for FY 2020/2021** 5,294

Enrollments for Live Classes 1,323

Online Enrollments 3,700

### Enrollments by Class

Defensive Driving (4-Hour) 2,001

Defensive Driving (8-Hour) 530

First Offender 2,104

Alive @ 25 (4-Hour) 59

Attitudinal Dynamics Driving (8-Hour) 135

Drivers License Reinstatement 1

Chronic Offender (8-Hour) 1

## Traffic School Classes

- **First Offender (FOT)** - a four hour curriculum covering traffic safety rules and consequences, including laws on seat belts, child restraint, speeding, DUI and most commonly committed traffic offenses.
- **Alive at 25 (A25, 4hr.)** - designed to reduce risk-taking behavior such as driving distracted among people 15-24 years of age utilizes embedded video and group discussions.
- **Defensive Driving-4 (DDC-4 hr.)** - certified by the National Safety Council, this course teaches the importance of safety belts and other restraints, dangers of speeding, proper following distance and effects of alcohol and drugs.
- **Defensive Driving-8 (DDC-8 hr.)** - is a more intensive version of the 4-hour course with emphasis on preventing traffic deaths and injuries.
- **Attitudinal Dynamics of Driving (ADD, 8hr.)** - an intense 8-hour curriculum in group format that addresses mental health and attitude as they affect the ability to safely operate a vehicle.
- **Chronic Offender (COF8, 8hr.)** - an intense 8-hour workshop that looks at chronic behavior and addresses the thought process behind specific behaviors that lead to destructive and socially unacceptable patterns that create chronic citation and arrest histories.
- **Driver License Reinstatement Class (DLRC, 3hr.)** - a tutorial class, utilizing the students own driving history and state reinstatement letter. The purpose of the class is to devise a viable plan of action for each student to follow for driver's license reinstatement. Ongoing counseling is offered for individuals with complex cases. The State of Tennessee, Department of Safety and Homeland Security approves the standardized curriculums through the National Safety Council (NSC) and certifies our programs and instructors. The NSC curriculums are accepted in all 50 States and used by all branches of the military both in the U.S. and abroad.

### Address:

Justice A.A. Birch Building,  
408 2nd Avenue North, Suite 1170,  
P.O. Box 196300, Nashville, TN 37219  
Phone: (615) 862-8345

Member: The American Society  
for Public Administration (ASPA)



Member: The National Safety  
Council & NSC International  
Advisory Committee





**Johnetta Nelson**  
Director

# Probation & DUI Bond

## Fiscal Year July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021 Probation Department Annual Report

The General Sessions Court Probation Department is committed to promoting and maintaining a safe community for the citizens of Nashville-Davidson County. The department is responsible for providing the necessary resources available to offenders in

order for them to successfully comply with the conditions of probation.

In addition to the supervision of regular misdemeanor probation cases assigned by General Sessions Courts, the Probation Department provides additional support to General Sessions' Specialty Courts and Day Reporting Programs operated by the Davidson County Sheriff's Office. Probation Officers coordinate alternative options to meet the needs of our clients by collaborating with the Human Trafficking Intervention Court, also known as Cherished H.E.A.R.T.S. Our department also works closely with the C.A.R.E. Court, aimed at participants ages 18-30. The Probation Department recognizes the importance of utilizing the Recovery Court and/or Mental Health and Veterans Court

### Probation Department Staff:

- \* **Probation Director** – Johnetta Nelson
- \* **Management Staff** – Cindy Cossey, Kenneth Connell, Michael Hannah and Laurel Howell
- \* **Cherished HEARTS Program Manager**—Melanie Taylor
- \* **Probation Support Staff**—Jennifer Norris-Allen, Laura Castillo and Tammy Tune
- \* **Multiple Offense DUI Bond Supervision**—Kenneth Connell and Theresa Fuqua
- \* **Probation Officers** – Joe Brady, Becky Freeman, Laurel Howell, Tonya Howell, Robin Lively, Jackie London, Prentiss Martin, Luis Meneses-Villalobos Chris Perry, LouEllen Pickard, PJ Postiglione, Alesia Putman, Katherine Rowden, Schley Sadler, Maria Schaffner, Chris Sharp, Johnny Velasco, and Jimmy Waggoner

as a means of addressing any substance abuse or mental health concerns our client base encounters. We also work closely with the Office of Family Safety, DA's Office, Mayor's Office, treatment providers, and other agencies on the High Risk Intervention Panel (HRIP), identifying and discussing high-risk domestic violence cases. Our joint efforts with these specialized courts and agencies allow our department to create resources that prove beneficial to the success of the client's well-being.

The Probation Department also supervises persons on bond who are accused of being a multiple DUI offender. The purpose of this intensive supervision is to protect the public from potentially high risk impaired drivers and to direct them to substance abuse treatment, drug testing and additional pretrial monitoring if needed.

During this past year, the Probation Department utilized staff expertise to provide information to clients on traffic and safety education, available community resources, and started a job initiative program with local businesses. The department held it's first job fair on June 17, 2021, and 15 probationers were hired.

The Probation Department launched specialized teams of officers to help those probationers who have critical needs. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the needs of many probationers to the point where it is difficult for some to comply with probation requirements. To address these concerns, the General Sessions Court Probation Department is focusing on providing resources to help the chronically unemployed, homeless persons and those requiring alcohol and drug treatment.

For more information about the General Sessions Court Probation Department, please visit:

<https://gscourtprobation.nashville.gov>

Prepared by: Johnetta Nelson, Director  
Becky Freeman, Probation Officer

**Address:** Ben West Building  
100 James Robertson Parkway  
Suite 10, P.O. Box 196300  
Nashville, TN 37201  
**Phone:** (615) 862-8380  
**Fax:** (615) 862-8364

<u>New Cases</u>		<u>Recidivism Percentage for Department</u>	
Probation	1,053	# with a Re-Arrest	171
DUI Bond	183	% with a Re-Arrest	0.16
Unsupervised/Under Advisement	1		
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,237</b>		
<u>Financial and Court-Ordered Public Service Work Hours</u>			
Victim Restitution Collected	\$92,547.81	<u>Drug Testing Program</u>	<u>Tests Per Program</u>
Probation Supervision Fees Collected	\$226,850.87	Probation	3,939
Court-Ordered Public Service Work Hours	9,075	DUI Bond	4,238
		<b>Total</b>	<b>8,177</b>
			<b>% Positive</b>
			41%
			31%





*Photo Courtesy of Angie Von Mann*



# General Sessions Court 2020-2021 Annual Report

