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# A Commitment to Justice and Public Safety

## 2024



District Attorney, Marc Bennett and Assistant District Attorney Robert Short at the Wichita Metro Crime Commission Awards ceremony. Short was named Criminal Justice Professional of the Year.

At the close of each year, the office of the District Attorney provides a year-end summary of the work done by the dedicated attorneys and staff in this office over the course of the previous year. Our mission is to enforce the law fairly, ethically, and consistently, ensuring accountability for offenders while protecting the rights of crime victims and all citizens. The success of our justice system depends on transparency and public trust, and we hope this report helps demonstrate our commitment to the safety and well-being of our community.

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## **I. Case Volume and Prosecutorial Workload**

The Sedwick County District Attorney's Office prosecutes violations of criminal, juvenile, and traffic laws in the 18th Judicial District. Managing this significant workload efficiently is critical to delivering justice.

<b>Case Type</b>	<b>Annual Filings</b>	<b>% Change from Previous Year</b>
<b>Adult Felony Cases Filed</b>	<b>2258</b>	<b>2% increase</b>
<b>Adult Misdemeanor Cases Filed</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>21% decrease</b>
<b>Juvenile Offender Cases Filed</b>	<b>553</b>	<b>9% decrease</b>
<b>Child in Need of Care (CINC) Cases Filed</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>No change</b>
<b>Traffic Filings</b>	<b>20,106</b>	<b>12% increase</b>
<b>Total Prosecutorial Filings</b>	<b>21,430</b>	<b>10% increase</b>

## Appeals

Our appellate team defends the convictions obtained by the various trial divisions against post-conviction challenges. By crafting legal briefs and delivering persuasive oral arguments before the higher courts, the unit ensures that valid convictions are upheld.

Activity	Annual Total
<b>Appeals filed by defendant</b>	<b>506</b>
<b>Oral Arguments</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Opinions Affirming Conviction</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>Opinions Reversing Conviction</b>	<b>9</b>

## Post-Conviction

A 60-1507 petition is a legal tool used by individuals in custody to challenge their conviction or sentence after their direct appeals have ended. It is the primary way to seek post-conviction relief in Kansas state courts for issues that couldn't be addressed during the initial trial or appeal. In 2024, our team of two attorneys filed **27** responses to KSA 60-1507 filings and **171** responses to other pro se motions filed by defendants representing themselves.

## Discovery and Digital Evidence

Modern prosecution requires handling massive amounts of digital evidence. In 2024, our office processed and distributed over **30.14** terabytes of discoverable information to defense attorneys.

Prosecutors are required to provide the defense with full “discovery” in each case we file. This includes, reports, transcripts, audio files, videos (typically, of interviews as well as commercial and private surveillance footage) as well as body worn camera recordings. As part of the discovery process in 2024, our team provided **582,118** pages of discovery, **147,338** videos, **43,903** body worn camera recordings, **53,132** audio files, **321,158** photos, and **312** cell phone downloads.

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## II. Priority: Violent Crime and Special Victims

In 2024, the office tried 98 jury trials, including many that involved homicides, sex crimes, domestic violence and crimes against children, reflecting the prioritization of violent crime prosecution.

### Violent Crime

Case Focus	Cases Tried to a Jury
<b>Homicide/Attempted Homicide Cases</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Sexual Assault Cases</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Crimes Against Children</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Domestic Violence</b>	<b>6</b>



Assistant District Attorney Jennifer Jameson addresses the Citizens Police Academy

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### **III. Accountability and Efficiency in Court**

The office remains committed to efficiently ensuring public safety and balancing the need for jury trials with the efficient resolution of cases. In 2022, the Resolution docket was instituted to focus on the resolution of nonviolent cases and drug possession cases in a focused and efficient setting. The goal is to ensure victims of property crimes are paid back and that drug users are incentivized to seek and successfully complete treatment. In 2024, almost 75% of the defendants on the docket chose to accept responsibility. The remainder are placed on the regular criminal docket.

#### **Resolution Docket**

<b>Cases</b>	<b>Annual Total</b>
<b>Cases Referred to Resolution Docket</b>	<b>937</b>
<b>Cases Resolved on Resolution Docket</b>	<b>694 (74%)</b>

#### **Specialty Courts and Alternatives to Incarceration**

The office of the District Attorney continues to support alternatives for first time offenders and for offenders whose crimes are driven by addiction. These programs seek to reduce recidivism, enhance rehabilitation and ensure the efficient use of resources.

<b>Program</b>	<b>Number of Referrals by SCDAO</b>	<b>Number of Graduations/Successful Completions</b>
<b>Drug Court</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>15 (33% success rate)</b>
<b>Diversion Program Agreements</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>194</b>

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#### IV. Community Engagement and Consumer Protection

The office of the District Attorney continues to engage with the public outside of the courtroom to improve community safety and protect citizens from financial harm.

- **Consumer Protection Unit:** This unit is dedicated to protecting Sedgwick County residents from fraud and unfair business practices. In 2024, the unit investigated 162 cases and filed 14 civil judgments on behalf of citizens, resulting in an order for payment of fees, fines, and consumer restitution. In 2024, this division was responsible for obtaining \$765,277.76 in favorable dispositions for Sedgwick County, including \$347,213.35 in refunds for consumers. Historically, the Division has returned nearly \$1.5 million in direct refunds to consumers in Sedgwick County since 2016.
- **Community Outreach:** Our staff participated in numerous events, including school presentations, community safety forums, and training sessions for local law enforcement.



Assistant District Attorney Chris Garcia at the Consumer Protection booth at the Senior Expo.

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## **V. Looking Forward**

The Sedgwick County District Attorney's Office remains committed to improving our operations and enhancing public safety. Thank you for your continued trust and support. We are honored to serve you.