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**NEWS RELEASE**

**2005 ADULT FELONY CRIMINAL PROSECUTIONS  
IN DAKOTA COUNTY**

**OVERVIEW**

Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom has released statistics for 2005 involving **adult felony criminal prosecutions** handled by his Office. These statistics do not reflect the total number of crimes occurring, but reflect the number of felony charges filed against individuals within Dakota County in 2005. The County Attorney is responsible for the prosecution of all felonies committed by adults (this includes persons age 18 and over and any juvenile certified for prosecution as an adult) that occur in the County. According to Backstrom:

- The number of **adults charged**<sup>1</sup> with felony offenses in Dakota County increased by 3% (**1,926**<sup>2</sup> adults were charged with felony offenses in 2005, compared to 1,866 in 2004).

**2004-2005 INCREASE/DECREASE IN ADULTS CHARGED WITH FELONIES (BY CITY)**

Cities which showed an **increase** in the number of adults charged were:

- ↑ Apple Valley (159 to 167)
- ↑ Burnsville (302 to 335)
- ↑ Dakota County Sheriff (196 to 222)
- ↑ Hastings (103 to 122)
- ↑ Rosemount (54 to 70)
- ↑ South St. Paul (161 to 169)
- ↑ West St. Paul (133 to 169)

Cities which showed a **decrease** in the number of adults charged were:

- ↓ Eagan (274 to 208)
- ↓ Inver Grove Heights (158 to 141)

Cities which **remained** the same in the number of adults charged were:

- Farmington (57)
- Lakeville (173)
- Mendota Heights (30)

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Juvenile and Protective Services Division  
Donald E. Bruce, Head

Civil Division  
Jay R. Stassen, Head

Victim/Witness Coordinator  
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Office Manager  
Norma J. Zabel

Child Support Enforcement Division  
Sandra M. Torgerson, Head

## ILLEGAL DRUG USE CONTINUES AS TOP PROBLEM

**Drug offenses** continue to represent the largest category of cases charged by the Dakota County Attorney's Office. **748<sup>3</sup>** defendants were charged with felony drug crimes in Dakota County in 2005, compared to 697 the year before, a 7% increase. The total number of defendants charged with drug offenses in 2005 represents approximately **39%** of the entire felony caseload of the Dakota County Attorney's Office. (See the attached chart for drug trends in the past ten years).

*Backstrom commented: "Illegal drug use in Dakota County and across our state continues to be an enormous issue. The dramatic increase in drug prosecutions in our community over the last decade is a sad reminder that Dakota County is not immune from the widespread problem of illegal drug use that we have in our nation. If you include all of the property crimes committed to finance illegal drug habits and the crimes of violence associated with the illegal drug trade, it is estimated that 55-60% of all felony prosecutions in Dakota County are related to the sale or use of illegal drugs."*

Backstrom indicated that methamphetamine continues to be the number one illegal drug problem in Dakota County. **388** individuals were charged with meth-related felonies in Dakota County in 2005, compared to 417 the year before. Backstrom attributed this decrease, however, to the 2005 change in law enacted by the Minnesota Legislature which restricted the sale of methamphetamine precursor chemicals, and not necessarily to a reduction in methamphetamine use in Dakota County. This law, which became effective on July 1, 2005, requires that products containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine be sold behind pharmacy counters and restricts the quantity of these drugs which can be lawfully purchased. Backstrom said this change in the law has dramatically reduced the number of small labs producing methamphetamine in our state. In Dakota County alone, the number of meth lab seizures dropped from 28 in 2004 to **8** in 2005.

*Backstrom commented: "While it is obviously good news that fewer meth labs are in operation today, over 80% of methamphetamine sold in Minnesota is imported into our state. Meth use continues to be a significant problem in Dakota County, as it is across our state and nation. Approximately 20% of all felony crimes charged in Dakota County last year involved the sale, manufacture or possession of methamphetamine. If you add in all of the other crimes associated with meth use (i.e. theft, robberies, burglaries and crimes of violence), it is believed that meth is involved in 30-35% of all felony prosecutions in our community."*

Backstrom noted that education of community members through Town Forums concerning the dangers associated with increasing use of methamphetamine has increased awareness by citizens which is important and must continue. Meth forums have been held in Rosemount (October 2004), Hastings (April 2005), Burnsville (October 2005), and Inver Grove Heights (January 2006). Another meth forum is scheduled for the **South St. Paul/West St. Paul/Mendota Heights area at Henry Sibley High School on March 6, 2006 at 7:00 p.m.** Backstrom encouraged community members to attend a forum and increase their level of awareness of the danger and warning signs of methamphetamine use. *"To effectively reduce methamphetamine use, we need a coordinated strategy of enforcement, treatment and prevention, and everyone in the community needs to be aware of the extent of this serious problem,"* Backstrom added.

Backstrom praised the continued efforts of the Dakota County Drug Task Force, which consists of officers from the Dakota County Sheriff's Department and police departments in the cities of Apple Valley, Burnsville, Eagan, Farmington, Hastings, Inver Grove Heights, Lakeville, Mendota Heights, Rosemount, South St. Paul, West St. Paul and Savage. Backstrom commented: *"This coordinated law enforcement effort has been extremely effective in investigating illegal drug activity and identifying those persons involved in illegal drug sales or use. Continuation of the Dakota County Drug Task Force, which relies heavily on federal grant funding is vital in combating the dramatic rise in the use of methamphetamine and illegal drugs in our community."*

### **FELONY VIOLENT CRIME CHARGES UP SIGNIFICANTLY**

Backstrom indicated that felony charges involving crimes of violence<sup>4</sup> increased significantly in Dakota County for the second year in a row. There were **512** charges of violent felonies in Dakota County in 2005 (an all-time high) compared to 430 violent felony charges in 2004, an increase of approximately **19%**. The ten-year average (1996-2005) for violent crimes charged in Dakota County is **371** (see the attached chart). *Backstrom stated: "While it is cause for concern that prosecutions for violent crime are on the rise in Dakota County, it is important to keep in mind that our violent crime rate is statistically quite low for the size of our County. Dakota County remains a safe community in which to live."*

### **DEFENDANTS CHARGED WITH MURDER**

Backstrom indicated that 7 defendants were charged with **murder** in Dakota County last year in connection with 6 deaths, down from 10 persons charged with murder in 2004 in connection with 6 deaths. The defendants charged with murder last year include one person charged in connection with a cold case from a 1979 unsolved homicide in West St. Paul. Of the 7 defendants charged with murder last year, 2 have been convicted and 5 have court cases still pending (along with 3 other pending murder cases from prior years). *Backstrom commented: "Dakota County averaged less than 3 homicides per year over the 10 years preceding 2004. An increase, however, has occurred the past two years. Homicide prosecutions involve significant time commitments on the part of both the County Attorney's Office and the investigating law enforcement agencies, and these prosecutions continue to strain our resources."*

### **FELONY DWI'S**

Beginning August 1, 2002, it became a **felony to drive under the influence** of alcohol or other controlled substances (DWI) if you have previously been convicted of DWI at least three times within the last 10 years. Felony DWI's are now being prosecuted by the County Attorney. Last year, this change in the law resulted in felony DWI charges against **66** defendants in Dakota County. Backstrom said his Office coordinates enforcement and prevention activities with the Safe Dakota Coalition, made up of all Dakota County law enforcement agencies and area high schools, community colleges and organizations committed to reducing alcohol-related crashes. *Backstrom commented: "Drunk driving kills or cripples more persons each year than any other crime in America. We must continue to dedicate resources to raise the level of awareness of these dangers in our efforts to prevent these tragedies."* In 2004, 8 persons were killed in alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes in Dakota County. Across Minnesota in 2004, 177 persons were killed and 3,622 persons were injured in alcohol-related car crashes. *"This tragic loss of life and the debilitating injuries caused by crashes involving drunk drivers requires every effort we can make to prevent these tragedies from occurring," Backstrom added.*

### **STRANGULATION IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES BECOMES A FELONY**

Beginning August 1, 2005, it became a felony to strangle or attempt to strangle someone during a domestic violence struggle. Backstrom praised the new law which has resulted in **27** individuals being charged with felony domestic violence in Dakota County in 2005. Backstrom commented: *"Domestic violence is a huge problem in our society and strangulation attempts signify an escalation of the level of violence in these cases. Making these serious crimes felonies was the right thing to do and will appropriately hold these offenders more accountable and provide greater protection to the victims of domestic violence."*

## FELONY PROPERTY CHARGES DROP

Backstrom said that felony property charges<sup>5</sup> in Dakota County dropped from 1,101 in 2004 to **934** in 2005, a decrease of almost 18%. While theft-related charges rose slightly from 369 in 2004 to **383** in 2005, forgery charges decreased significantly from 226 in 2004 to **151** in 2005, as did welfare fraud charges, down from 155 in 2004 to **62** in 2005. Backstrom commented: *“Part of the reason for the drop in felony property charges last year in Dakota County is likely due to the fact that Dakota County law enforcement agencies and the County Attorney’s Office have had to dedicate more resources to deal with violent crime charges which rose by 19% last year.”*

## AUTO THEFT CASES RISE

Backstrom indicated that his office coordinates a multi-jurisdictional auto theft prosecution unit that pursues prosecution of offenders stealing cars in Dakota, Scott and Carver counties. The number of defendants charged with felony auto theft-related offenses rose from 129 in 2004 to **163** in 2005 in all three counties (**105** in Dakota County alone). Backstrom indicated that part of the state grant funding this tri-county auto theft prosecution project includes prevention efforts. Backstrom commented: *“Most cars stolen are unlocked with the keys left in them. To avoid falling victim to auto thieves, drivers need to take common sense precautions like locking their cars and keeping them in garages or more secure locations overnight whenever possible.”*

Attached is a chart detailing felony level charges filed by the Dakota County Attorney’s Office in 2005. Also attached are charts comparing statistical information about adult felony prosecutions for the last decade. This information is also available on the Dakota County Attorney website at [www.co.dakota.mn.us/attorney/whatsnew](http://www.co.dakota.mn.us/attorney/whatsnew).

If you have any questions, contact James Backstrom at 651-438-4440.

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- <sup>1</sup> Criminal charges are not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.
- <sup>2</sup> Some of these defendants may have been charged more than one time with crimes occurring in separate behavioral incidents.
- <sup>3</sup> Some of these defendants were charged with crimes involving more than one illegal drug in the same or separate behavioral incidents.
- <sup>4</sup> Felony crimes of violence include: homicide (murder, attempted murder, conspiracy to commit murder, and manslaughter), assault, offenses involving dangerous weapons, kidnapping, robbery, sex offenses, criminal vehicular homicide/injury and terroristic threats. The statistics referenced in this section reflect the number of felony charges and not defendants. A single defendant may be charged with more than one felony offense.
- <sup>5</sup> Felony property offenses include: forgery-related offenses, theft-related offenses (including some auto theft), burglary, welfare fraud, criminal damage to property, stolen property (including some auto theft), unemployment/worker’s compensation/tax fraud, and illegal motor vehicle use. The statistics referenced in this section reflect the number of felony charges and not defendants. A single defendant may be charged with more than one felony offense.

# 2005 ADULT FELONY OFFENSES

**OFFICE OF  
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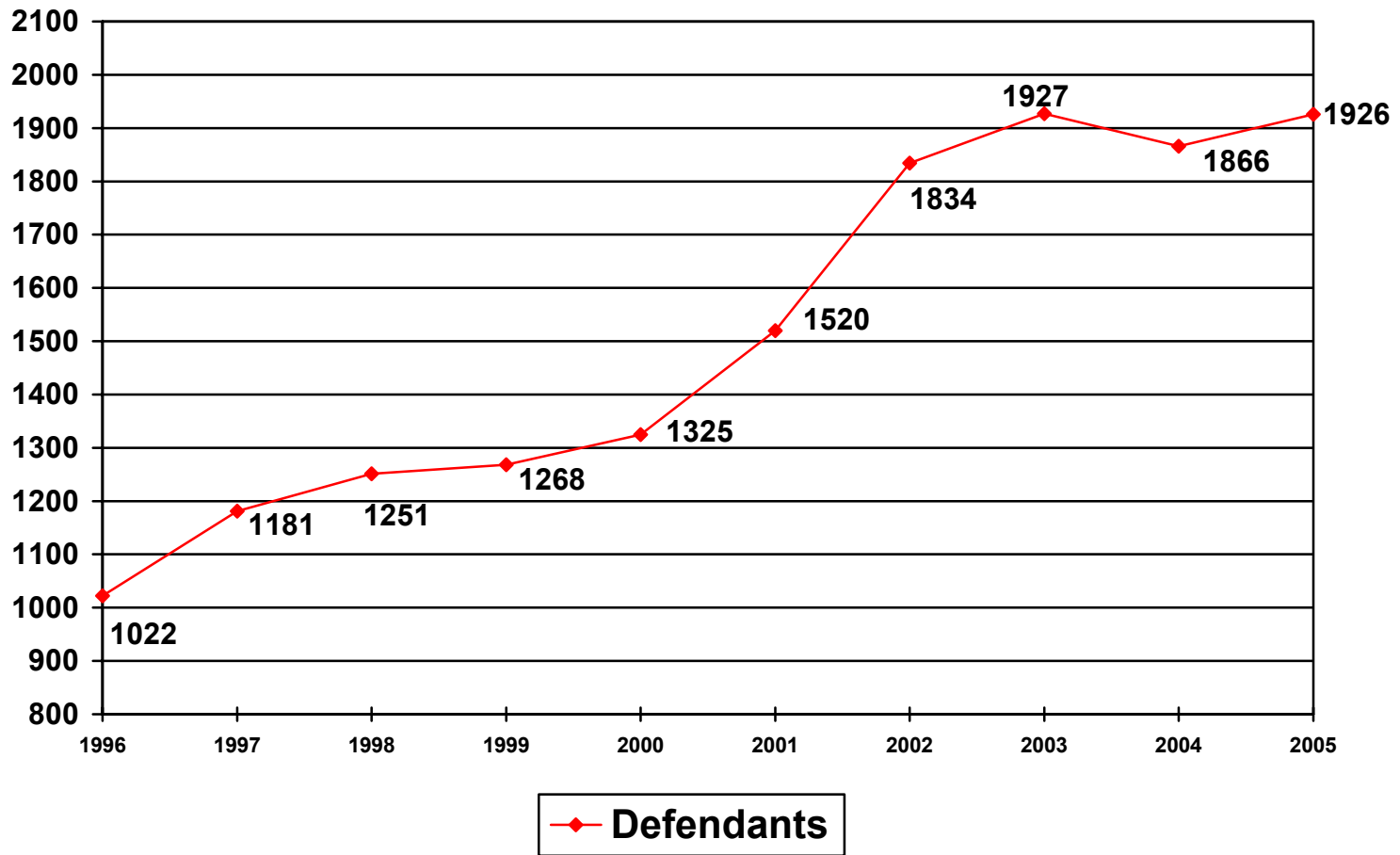
	Drug Related <sup>1</sup>	Theft-Related & Defeating Security <sup>2</sup>	Burglary	Forgery Related	Assault Related	Sex-Related & Intrafamilial & Minor Victim	Felony DWI	Terroristic Threats	Criminal Damage to Property	Fugitive From Justice	Stolen Property <sup>2</sup>	Traffic Related (Including Fleeing)	Welfare Fraud	Homicide <sup>3</sup>	Robbery	Public Health and Safety	Possession or Use of Dangerous Weapons	Criminal Vehicular Homicide and Injury	Unemployment & Workers Comp Fraud/Tax-Related	Stalking Related	Kidnapping	Obstructing Justice, Escape, Public Corruption	Arson	Tampering With a Witness	Depriving of Custodial Rights/Support	Illegal Motor Vehicle Use <sup>2</sup>	Abuse/Neglect of Minor	Gambling Related	Perjury Related	TOTAL CHARGES <sup>4</sup>	TOTAL DEFENDANTS
Apple Valley	64	47	11	6	19	9	8	12	5	3	6	5	0	0	6	8	1	5	0	2	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	221	167
Burnsville	169	84	37	23	29	8	10	19	11	11	9	7	0	10	12	3	7	2	0	7	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	462	335
Dakota County Sheriff	89	10	11	4	7	9	7	3	13	41	8	6	62	0	0	2	1	2	17	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	295	222	
Eagan	101	56	12	34	10	15	19	7	5	3	9	5	0	5	1	7	0	1	2	5	4	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	305	208
Farmington	27	10	3	4	6	4	12	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	74	57	
Hastings	46	18	15	8	19	10	1	7	14	8	1	1	0	19	0	3	2	2	0	0	3	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	180	122	
Inver Grove Heights	79	20	12	13	6	10	8	13	5	1	7	5	0	1	4	2	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	189	141	
Lakeville	74	38	19	18	8	18	13	8	2	4	7	9	0	0	2	5	4	2	0	0	1	4	0	0	1	0	1	0	238	173	
Mendota Heights	13	9	7	0	2	5	2	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	47	30	
Minnesota State Patrol	23	6	1	0	1	0	17	2	1	0	3	8	0	0	0	1	0	9	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	74	48	
Other Law Enforcement	2	3	1	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	4	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	21	15
Rosemount	27	19	5	5	5	12	3	7	2	0	2	4	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	94	70	
South St. Paul	89	28	8	5	17	12	9	12	17	3	7	5	0	0	2	0	4	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	225	169	
West St. Paul	78	35	14	31	11	6	2	9	5	2	12	5	0	7	10	4	3	0	0	2	0	4	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	245	169
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>881</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2670</b>	<b>1926</b>

1. Drug-related statistics are reported under the city where the offense occurred (drug offenses occurring in townships are recorded under the Dakota County Sheriff or the Minnesota State Patrol. Drug Task Force includes representatives from the Apple Valley, Burnsville, Eagan, Farmington, Hastings, Inver Grove Heights, Lakeville, Mendota Heights, Rosemount, Savage, South St. Paul, and West St. Paul Police Departments, and the Dakota County Sheriff's Office.
2. Auto theft-related charges are listed with Theft-Related, Stolen Property and Illegal Motor Vehicle Use offenses.
3. Homicide offenses include charges for murder, attempted murder, conspiracy to commit murder, and manslaughter.
4. Numbers in all categories include charges of attempts to commit the crime.

# Dakota County

## Adults Charged with Felonies

### 1996 to 2005

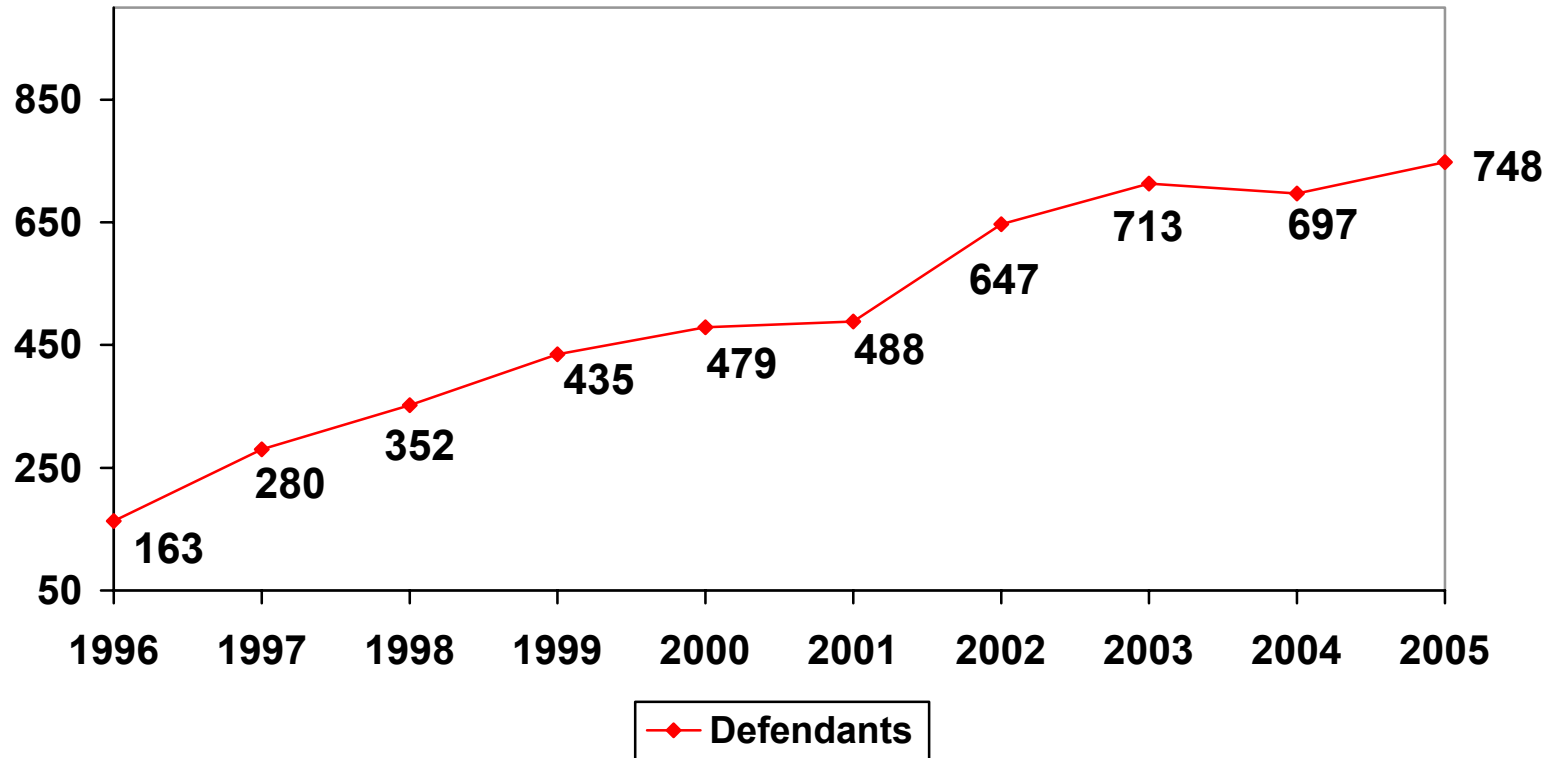


Compiled by: James C. Backstrom, Dakota County Attorney

# Dakota County

## Adult Drug-Related Defendants Prosecuted

### 1996-2005



Compiled by: James C. Backstrom, Dakota County Attorney

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# Dakota County

## Violent Crime Charges Involving Adult Defendants

### 1996 - 2005

CRIME	TEN YEAR AVERAGE 1996 – 2005	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
MURDER <sup>1</sup>	Figures Not Available	3 <sup>3</sup>	3 <sup>4</sup>	3 <sup>5</sup>	10 <sup>6</sup>	7 <sup>7</sup>
ATTEMPTED MURDER <sup>1</sup>	Figures Not Available	0	1	0	7	5
KIDNAPPING	12	16	14	11	15	18
SEX-RELATED	91	89	102	93	99	118
ROBBERY	34	21	44	29	27	40
FELONY ASSAULTS	96	77	105	101	94	141
TERRORISTIC THREATS	72	73	86	73	82	105
DANGEROUS WEAPONS	29	29	41	36	48	24
CRIMINAL VEHICULAR HOMICIDE/INJURY	20	8	9	13	22	24
<b>TOTAL<sup>2</sup>:</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>512</b>

Compiled by: James C. Backstrom, Dakota County Attorney

<sup>1</sup>Murder and Attempted Murder figures, which also include conspiracy to commit murder and manslaughter (if any), reflect the actual number of persons charged with these offenses. The remaining crimes listed are based upon the number of felony charges filed.

<sup>2</sup>The total represents the number of charges of individual counts of violent crime (including murder, attempted murder, conspiracy to commit murder and manslaughter).

<sup>3</sup>There were three persons charged with homicide in 2001 in connection with two deaths.

<sup>4</sup>There were three persons charged with homicide in 2002 in connection with three deaths.

<sup>5</sup>There were three persons charged with homicide in 2003 in connection with three deaths, one that occurred in 2000.

<sup>6</sup>There were ten persons charged with homicide in 2004 in connection with six deaths.

<sup>7</sup>There were seven persons charged with homicide in 2005 in connection with six deaths, one that occurred in 1979. One additional murder took place on 12-30-05 which was not charged until 1-3-06 (this crime will be included in 2006 statistics).