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**NEWS RELEASE**

**2007 DAKOTA COUNTY JUVENILE PROSECUTION STATISTICS RELEASED**

**OVERVIEW**

Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom has released statistics for 2007 involving **juvenile prosecutions** handled by his Office. **These statistics do not reflect the total number of crimes occurring, but reflect the number of charges filed against juveniles within Dakota County in 2007.** (These statistics also do not reflect the total number of criminal incidents occurring, as more than one juvenile can be charged in a single incident.) In Minnesota, County Attorneys prosecute all crimes committed by juveniles (youth 10-17 years old) that occur in the County including felonies, gross misdemeanors, misdemeanors and some petty misdemeanors. Backstrom pointed out the following highlights:

- The total number of **juveniles charged**<sup>1</sup> with criminal offenses by his office decreased slightly from 1,842<sup>2</sup> in 2006 to **1,820** in 2007.
- The number of **felony level juvenile offenders** charged also decreased from 349 in 2006 to **334** in 2007.

**2007 INCREASE/DECREASE IN JUVENILES CHARGED (BY CITY)**

Cities showing an **increase** in the number of juvenile offenders charged with offenses included:

- ↑ Dakota County Sheriff (69 to **82**)
- ↑ Farmington (81 to **107**)
- ↑ Hastings (124 to **129**)
- ↑ Inver Grove Heights (137 to **171**)
- ↑ Mendota Heights (35 to **48**)
- ↑ Rosemount (101 to **102**)
- ↑ West St. Paul (107 to **120**)

Cities showing a **decrease** in the number of juvenile offenders charged included:

- ↓ Apple Valley (275 to **261**)
- ↓ Burnsville (282 to **274**)
- ↓ Eagan (262 to **225**)
- ↓ Lakeville (196 to **131**)
- ↓ South St. Paul (157 to **154**)

## **OVERALL DECREASE IN JUVENILES PROSECUTED**

The 2007 total of **1,820 youth charged** is slightly less than the 2006 total of 1,842. Backstrom said this is the fifth year in a row that Dakota County has experienced a decrease in the overall number of juveniles prosecuted for criminal acts. Backstrom also emphasized that most of the charges filed were for misdemeanor level offenses, down from 1,370 juveniles charged in 2006 to **1,360** juveniles charged in 2007. *“After almost tripling in the first six years of the 1990’s, the overall number of juveniles prosecuted for criminal acts in Dakota County has leveled off considerably in the last ten years (see attached chart),”* Backstrom commented. Juvenile prosecutions in the County actually peaked in 2002, when 2,070 youth were charged with crimes. *“It is obviously a good sign that the number of youth charged with a crime in our community has dropped for five straight years despite the 10% population growth\* of 10 to 17-year-olds in our County during this time,”* Backstrom added.

## **JUVENILES CHARGED WITH FELONY OFFENSES**

Backstrom said the number of juveniles charged with a felony in 2007 decreased slightly to **334** (compared to 349 in 2006). *Backstrom commented: “The fact that the number of felony offenses committed by juveniles in Dakota County is less today than it was ten years ago is remarkable in a county of our size and growth.”* (See attached chart of juvenile felony offenders for the last ten years.) Dakota County has grown on average about 2% per year over the last decade and is currently home to approximately 400,000 residents. *Backstrom added: “I believe the low number of serious crimes involving juveniles in Dakota County is a reflection of the close working relationships that police departments have developed with schools through school resource officers and the many active prevention and early intervention efforts for youth provided by police, the County Attorney’s Office and the Public Health Department.”*

## **JUVENILE CRIMES OF VIOLENCE**

The number of charges for **violent juvenile offenses**<sup>3</sup> decreased slightly in 2007 to **371** from 382 in 2006 (see attached chart of juvenile violent crime charges in Dakota County over the last decade). Backstrom said the main violent crime committed by juveniles was misdemeanor assault which increased from 224 offenses charged in 2006 to **246** in 2007. *Backstrom commented: “The number of violent juvenile offenses charged in Dakota County in 2007 (i.e. 371) is actually less today than it was in 1998 (i.e. 407) and lower than the ten-year average (i.e. 414), again extremely positive statistics given Dakota County’s continuing growth of its juvenile population.”* Backstrom indicated that last year in Dakota County one juvenile was charged with murder.

## **SCHOOL-RELATED CRIME/VIOLENCE**

Backstrom estimates that 25-30% of the juvenile offenses happen in schools or on school property which is not that surprising given this is where young people spend most of their time during the school year. However, he emphasized that Dakota County schools (and those elsewhere) remain a safe place for students and staff. The reality is that law enforcement, schools and the County Attorney’s Office work together and act quickly to incidents involving rumored hit lists, weapons being brought to school or notes containing threats to others. In 2007, **18** youth were charged with school-related violent offenses (includes felonies, gross misdemeanors and misdemeanors). Of those, **11\*** youth were charged with making terroristic threats compared with 22 in 2006 (\*one youth was charged with both possession of a dangerous weapon and terroristic threats). One youth was charged with possession of a dangerous weapon on school property (dangerous weapons include: BB guns, an Air-Soft gun, replica firearm, knife or switchblade, or bombs).

The County Attorney's Office continued to **Prioritize Prosecutions in Schools** (PPS) in 2007 by prioritizing and quickly prosecuting crimes that occur in school or at school-related activities. Since the PPS initiative in 2003, there has been closer contact between the County Attorney's Office and schools and includes trainings for students and staff, community forums, prevention programming and sharing of information, in addition to fast tracking on crimes associated with school activities. Backstrom noted: *"By working together with Dakota County school districts and police departments, we insure a healthier and safer learning environment for children. Quicker prosecution of crimes occurring in schools or on school property also serves as a deterrent to future criminal activity by youth."*

## **PREVENTION, EARLY INTERVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAMS**

**Prevention** of juvenile crime has long been a priority for County Attorney Backstrom, who has served as a co-chair of the Juvenile Justice Committees for both the Minnesota County Attorneys Association (2000-2005) and the National District Attorneys Association (1994-2001 and 2003-present). *"I am a strong believer in prevention, early intervention, and education efforts to reduce juvenile crime," Backstrom stated. "I believe the single most effective thing we can do to reduce crime in our nation is to invest time, resources and energy in our nation's children," he added.*

Backstrom indicated that the Dakota County Attorney's Office coordinates a number of **youth accountability programs for first time offenders** involved in the illegal use of alcohol, small amounts of marijuana, and tobacco, as well as lower-level property crimes. A more intensive program for second time users of alcohol or small amounts of marijuana is also available. In total, **1,690 juvenile offenders were referred to various accountability programs** as an alternative to juvenile court in 2007.

Juveniles successfully completing these programs are not prosecuted in juvenile court for these offenses. Youth accountability programs are designed to insure that youth committing certain first or second time non-violent offenses are held responsible for their criminal behavior quickly outside of the courtroom. *Backstrom commented: "While these programs divert youthful offenders outside of the court process, they are designed to insure appropriate accountability with an education and prevention focus. Youth pay for the cost of attending these alternatives to court, which is similar to the fine they would receive from a judge for these offenses and, where appropriate, pay restitution to the victim and complete some community work service. A parent or guardian is also required to attend all youth accountability programs with their child, which we believe is important and necessary.*

Another program in operation since 2003 is the **Juvenile Drug Court**. This focused "problem-solving" court intervention is designed to provide greater oversight and treatment of youth who are chemically addicted. In 2007, **13** youth were participating in the Juvenile Drug Court Program at any given time. The Juvenile Drug Court handles cases involving any type of crime where alcohol or drugs are the primary contributing factor for the criminal behavior. *Backstrom commented: "While nowhere near the problem it is involving adult crime, possession and use of illegal drugs is a concern involving juveniles as well. Drug courts involve more interaction between the judge and other criminal justice professionals with the juvenile offender and emphasize more intensive monitoring and treatment. Drug courts can help offenders overcome their chemical addictions and have a proven success rate in reducing recidivism across America."*

The **Peer Court program**, which is a joint project of the Dakota County Attorney, Community Corrections and District Court, has been in existence since 2000 and takes place in seven area high schools Eastview (Apple Valley), Burnsville, Hastings, Simley (Inver Grove Heights), Lakeville North and South, and South St. Paul. Peer Court allows teens to serve as jurors and personally become involved in resolving the problem of juvenile crime in their community. *"Peer Court is not only a unique way of holding juvenile offenders accountable for their actions, it is a great learning experience for members of the peer jury," Backstrom noted.* In 2007, **30** juveniles were referred to Peer Court. District Court Judge Tom Poch was instrumental in establishing this program and remains active in its implementation in Dakota County.

The **Juvenile Firesetter Education and Intervention program** is for youth ages 6-17 who are curious about or caught lighting a fire. In 2007, **23** Dakota County juveniles (and their parents) were referred. This quarterly educational class, which is coordinated by the Dakota County Attorney's Office, has been well received and is a joint project with the State Fire Marshall's Office and local fire departments in our community.

## **JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION INITIATIVES**

Backstrom indicated that his office was involved in numerous crime prevention efforts in 2007. The **Accelerated Court Truancy (ACT)** program included Independent School District 200 (Hastings), Independent School District 197 (West St. Paul, Mendota Heights and part of Eagan), and District 199 (Inver Grove Heights). ACT allows students with three or more unexcused absences from school to attend an intervention meeting, along with their parents, at which time the student and parents receive additional information regarding the student's attendance history and truancy laws. Parents and student also work with school officials and county truancy officers to identify and address causes for the unexcused absences. Unlike traditional truancy efforts that do not result in intervention until after a seventh unexcused absence (which exist in all of the remaining school districts within Dakota County), the accelerated program is designed to address unexcused absences more quickly in hopes of getting these children off the streets and back into school without court intervention. Backstrom said that studies have shown that children who are truant from school are more likely to engage in criminal behavior and abuse alcohol and other drugs. *"Keeping kids in school not only helps them get the education they need to become successful and productive adults, it reduces crime in our community," Backstrom noted.*

An **anti-bullying initiative**, launched by the County Attorney as part of the PPS program during the 2002-03 school year, continues to be a successful program of educating students on the dangers of bullying and harassing behaviors. Presentations on this topic are also made to teachers and community members throughout the year. Backstrom indicated that bullying is too often dismissed as part of growing up, when it can actually be a warning sign of aggressive and violent behavior, which if not addressed can escalate and become even more harmful. *Backstrom commented: "Bullying adversely impacts more children than most adults realize. Bullying peaks in middle school and the level of violence associated with it increases in high school if it isn't stopped."* It has been reported that 160,000 children skip school every day in America because they fear being attacked or intimidated by another student. Up to 60% of children who bully will have a criminal record before the age of 24. Backstrom has developed two 45-minute presentations (one for grade 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> students and one for teachers or parents) which cover: types of bullying and harassing behavior, statistics associated with it, and valuable information for bullies, victims, bystanders, staff and parents. **Over 12,000** students, teachers and parents have heard Backstrom's anti-bullying message since 2002.

Details of the juvenile cases charged by the Dakota County Attorney's Office in 2007 are broken down on the attached charts by type of crime and jurisdiction. In addition to the three statistical charts, attached are three separate charts that cover trends in overall juvenile delinquency prosecutions, juvenile violent crime charges and juvenile dangerous weapons charges. This information is also available on the Dakota County Attorney website at <http://www.dakotacounty.us/attorney>. **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> An individual may be charged with more than one felony offense in one behavioral incident.

<sup>3</sup> Violent juvenile offenses include all levels of homicide, attempted homicide, assault, offenses involving dangerous weapons, kidnapping, robbery, sex offenses and terroristic threats. The statistics in this section reflect the number of charges and not juvenile offenders. A juvenile offender may be charged with more than one offense in a single behavioral incident.

\* Population growth of youth ages 10-17 from 2002-2006.

## 2007 JUVENILE FELONY OFFENSES

OFFICE OF DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY  JAMES C. BACKSTROM COUNTY ATTORNEY 1560 HIGHWAY 55 HASTINGS, MN 55033-2392 651-438-4438	Burglary	Theft Related	Criminal Damage to Property	Drug Related	Sex Related*	Robbery*	Terroristic Threats*	Dangerous Weapons*	Assault Related*	Receiving Stolen Property	Unauthorized Use Motor Vehicle	Arson	Forgery Related	Fleeing In A Motor Vehicle	Homicide (Including Attempts)*	Tampering With a Witness	Public Health & Safety	Criminal Vehicle Injury*	Kidnapping*	Traffic Related	TOTAL CHARGES	TOTAL OFFENDERS
Apple Valley	6	4	7	1	3	9	4	7	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	46	42
Burnsville	19	15	6	7	2	2	2	0	1	1	1	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	62	43
Dakota County Sheriff *	4	5	2	2	2	1	4	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	19
Eagan	9	12	7	5	5	1	1	4	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	49	48
Farmington	11	6	0	3	0	3	0	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	29	21
Hastings	11	8	0	4	2	0	1	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	31	25
Inver Grove Heights	14	8	4	0	2	1	5	0	3	3	1	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	45	35
Lakeville	4	5	6	9	7	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	33	27
Mendota Heights	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
Other Law Enforcement	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	6
Rosemount	0	2	6	3	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	17
South St. Paul	13	3	9	5	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	35	35
West St. Paul	2	2	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	11
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>334</b>

\* Drug-related are reported under the city in which the offense occurred. The 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.

\*\* Numbers in all categories include charges of attempts to commit the crime.

## 2007 JUVENILE GROSS MISDEMEANOR OFFENSES

OFFICE OF DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY  JAMES C. BACKSTROM COUNTY ATTORNEY 1560 HIGHWAY 55 HASTINGS, MN 55033-2392 651-438-4438	Theft	Obstructing Justice	Criminal Damage to Property	Assault-Related*	Dangerous Weapons*	Traffic Related	Forgery Related	Stolen Property	Sex Related*	Burglary	Furnishing Alcohol to a Minor	Arson	Escape from Custody	Disorderly Conduct	TOTAL CHARGES	TOTAL OFFENDERS
Apple Valley	11	5	2	3	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	27	26
Burnsville	5	3	2	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	14	13
Dakota County Sheriff *	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	2
Eagan	10	7	5	1	0	1	2	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	31	27
Farmington	3	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	9	8
Hastings	0	3	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	8	8
Inver Grove Heights	0	3	3	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	10	9
Lakeville	2	1	4	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	12	11
Mendota Heights	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
Other Law Enforcement	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
Rosemount	1	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	4
South St. Paul	8	1	2	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	15	7
West St. Paul	3	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	46	26	23	10	9	8	7	7	6	2	2	1	1	1	149	126

\* Drug-related are reported under the city in which the offense occurred. The 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.

\*\* Numbers in all categories include charges of attempts to commit the crime.

## 2007 JUVENILE MISDEMEANOR & PETTY MISDEMEANOR OFFENSES

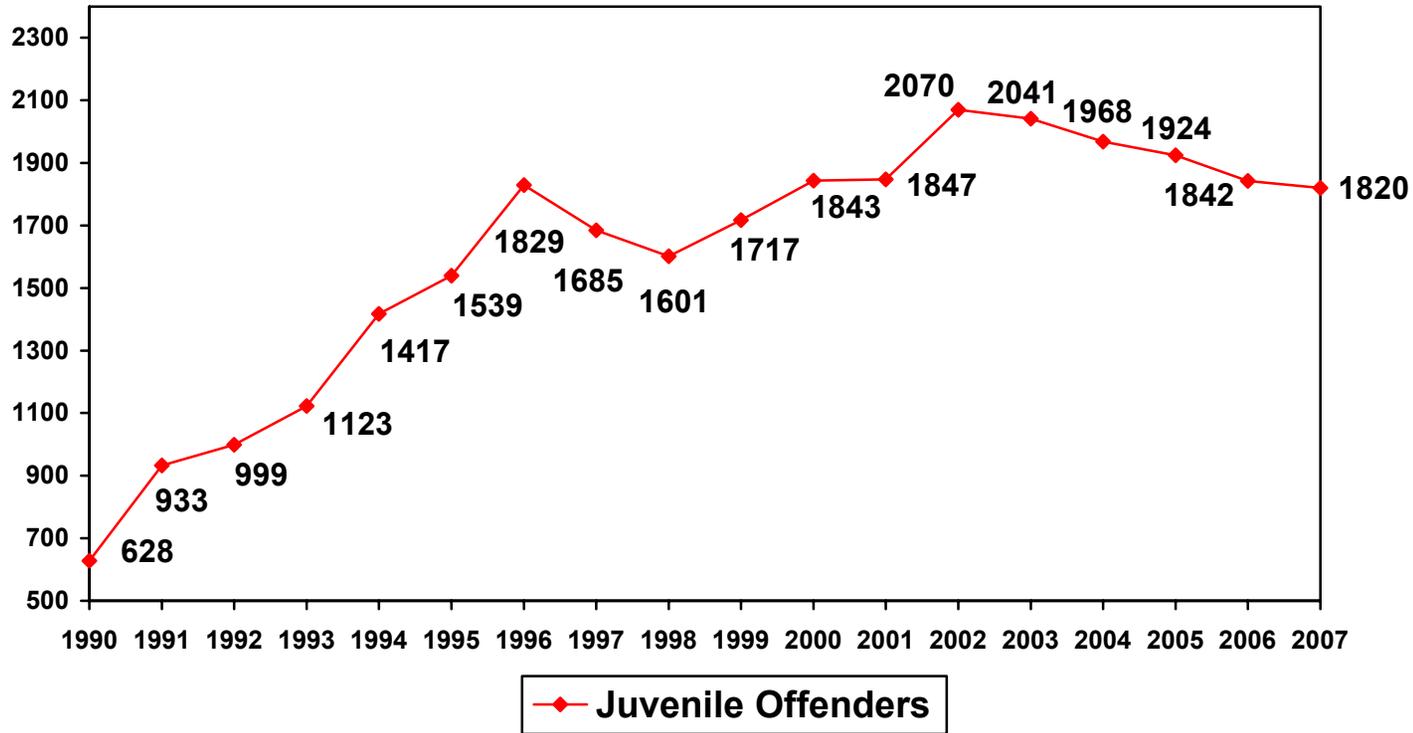
OFFICE OF DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY  JAMES C. BACKSTROM COUNTY ATTORNEY 1560 HIGHWAY 55 HASTINGS, MN 55033-2392 651-438-4438	Disorderly Conduct Related	Theft	Assault Related*	Petty Offenses	Traffic Misdemeanors	Consumption/Possession of Alcohol	Obstructing Justice (Non-Traffic)	Traffic Citations	Criminal Damage to Property	Stolen Property	Burglary; Trespassing	Tampering with a Motor Vehicle	Ordinance Violation/Non-weapon*	Possess Small Amount Marijuana-Petty	Public Nuisance	Ordinance Violation/Weapon Related	Legend Drugs & Equipment	Violation of an OFP or Harassment Order	Dangerous Weapons*	Arson	TOTAL CHARGES	TOTAL OFFENDERS
Apple Valley	84	38	25	15	13	14	5	5	12	11	5	4	4	3	3	2	1	0	1	0	245	193
Burnsville	62	113	19	11	9	7	12	7	3	4	6	5	4	5	1	2	0	2	0	1	273	218
Dakota County Sheriff	35	4	16	2	5	2	1	2	6	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	77	61
Eagan	44	40	35	22	18	21	7	7	8	8	7	4	4	4	0	0	2	0	1	0	232	150
Farmington	40	23	9	2	1	3	3	0	1	4	1	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	91	78
Hastings	22	24	36	12	7	9	1	10	5	2	4	2	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	139	96
Inver Grove Heights	70	14	34	8	8	8	9	2	3	2	9	4	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	174	127
Lakeville	37	25	11	15	13	10	9	2	5	1	3	2	3	1	1	2	0	2	0	0	142	93
Mendota Heights	20	3	5	9	4	1	0	4	3	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	55	38
Other Law Enforcement	3	0	2	0	2	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	9
Rosemount	26	13	13	12	6	10	10	5	3	2	0	1	10	2	1	0	1	0	1	0	116	81
South St. Paul	44	17	31	4	6	5	5	1	6	12	7	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	142	112
West St. Paul	21	65	10	3	6	5	3	5	2	1	4	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	129	104
<b>TOTAL</b>	508	379	246	115	98	95	65	57	57	50	48	31	29	17	10	8	8	5	3	1	1830	1360

\* Drug-related are reported under the city in which the offense occurred. The 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.

\*\* Numbers in all categories include charges of attempts to commit the crime.

# RECENT TRENDS IN JUVENILE DELINQUENCY PROSECUTIONS

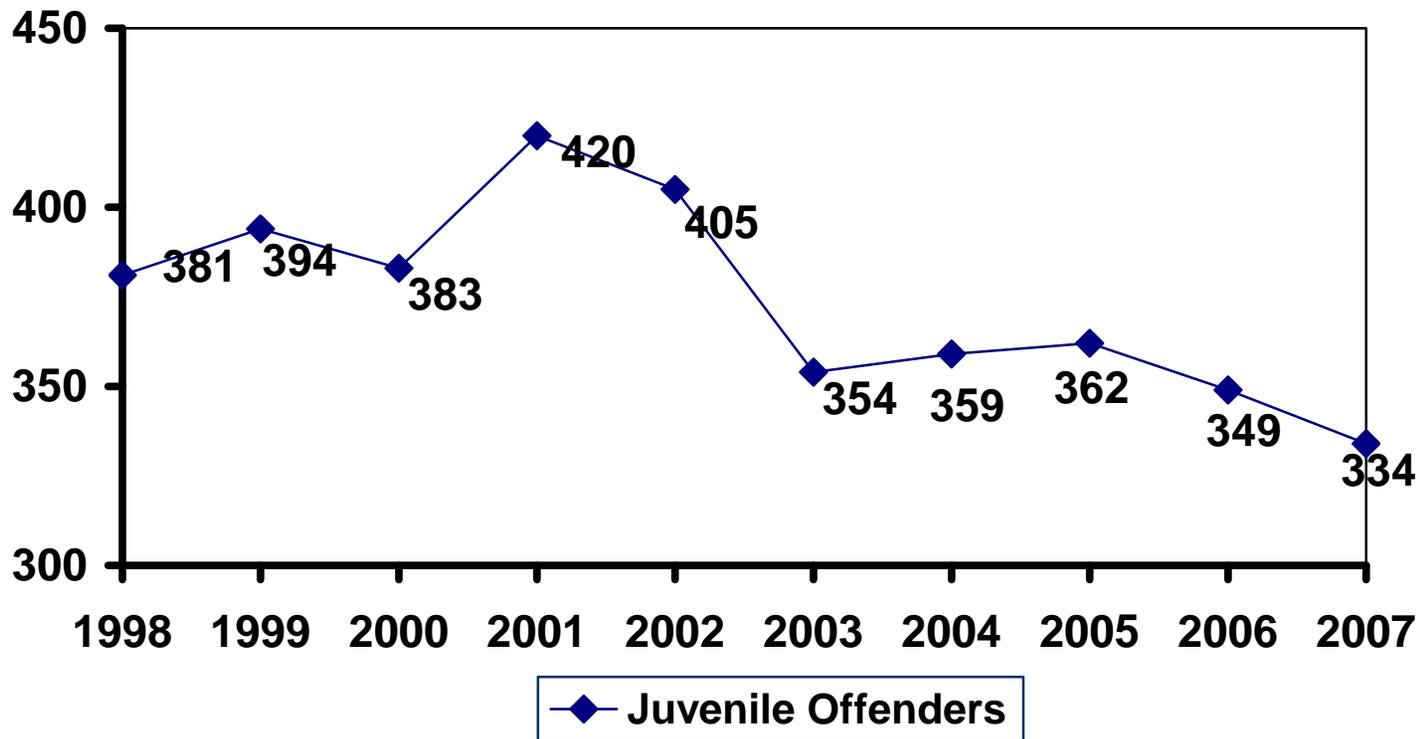
## Filed by the Dakota County Attorney's Office



These include some petty misdemeanors and all misdemeanors, gross misdemeanors and felonies committed by Dakota County youth under the age of 18 in Dakota County.

Compiled by  
JAMES C. BACKSTROM  
DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY

# FELONY LEVEL OFFENSES JUVENILE OFFENDERS 1998-2007



This includes felonies committed by Dakota County youth under the age of 18 in Dakota County.

Compiled by  
JAMES C. BACKSTROM  
DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY

# Juvenile Violent Crime Charges in Dakota County

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**Total Charges for Juvenile Crimes of Violence  
(Homicide, Attempted Homicide, Assault, Offenses Involving  
Dangerous Weapons, Kidnapping, Criminal Vehicular Homicide/Injury,  
Robbery, Sex Offenses and Terroristic Threats\*)**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Violent Crime Charges</u>
1998 .....	407
1999 .....	426
2000 .....	399
2001 .....	430
2002 .....	487
2003 .....	454
2004 .....	375
2005 .....	407
2006 .....	382
2007 .....	371
<b>Ten Year Average ...</b>	<b>414</b>

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\* The statistics do NOT include any juveniles prosecuted as adults for any of these crimes. In 2007, two juveniles were prosecuted as adults.

# RECENT TRENDS IN JUVENILE DANGEROUS WEAPONS- RELATED CHARGES

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Felonies</b>	34	22	28	35	30	23	30	26	30	16
<b>Gross Misdemeanors</b>	5	5	12	6	3	8	17	7	15	9
<b>Misdemeanors</b>	19	17	10	8	4	11	11	2	10	3
<b>Ordinance Violations</b>	13	8	15	12	11	9	5	19	11	8
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>36</b>

**Ten-Year Average is 56.7**

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