

OFFICE OF DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY
JAMES C. BACKSTROM
COUNTY ATTORNEY



Dakota County Judicial Center
1560 Highway 55
Hastings, Minnesota 55033-2392
Phillip D. Prokopowicz, Chief Deputy
Karen A. Schaffer, First Assistant
Monica Jensen, Community Relations Director

Telephone
(651) 438-4438
FAX: (651) 438-4479 (Civil Division)
FAX: (651) 438-4500 (Criminal Division)
FAX: (651) 438-4499 (Juvenile/Admin Division)
E-mail: attorney@co.dakota.mn.us

February 25, 2009

NEWS RELEASE

2008 DAKOTA COUNTY JUVENILE PROSECUTION STATISTICS RELEASED

OVERVIEW

Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom has released statistics for 2008 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 2008.** (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 and a number of crimes occurring in 2008 remain under investigation by law enforcement agencies.) 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**¹ with criminal offenses by his office decreased from 1,820² in 2007 to **1,650** in 2008 (a drop of 9%).
- The number of **felony level juvenile offenders** charged also decreased 22% from 334 in 2007 to **260** in 2008.

2008 INCREASE/DECREASE IN JUVENILES CHARGED (BY CITY)

The following reflects all levels of charging statistics involving juvenile cases referred from individual cities and the Dakota County Sheriff's Office*:

Apple Valley **increased** from 261 to **291**
Burnsville **decreased** from 274 to **191**
Dakota County Sheriff **increased** from 82 to **121**
Eagan **increased** from 225 to **242**
Farmington **increased** from 107 to **124**
Hastings **decreased** from 129 to **103**
Inver Grove Heights **decreased** from 171 to **129**
Lakeville **decreased** from 131 to **127**
Mendota Heights **decreased** from 48 to **21**
Rosemount **decreased** from 102 to **87**
South St. Paul **decreased** from 154 to **124**
West St. Paul **decreased** from 120 to **85**

* **NOTE: These statistics reflect the total number of charges filed against juvenile offenders in 2008, not the number of individuals charged (one person can be charged with multiple offenses) or the number of crimes occurring.**

OVERALL DECREASE IN JUVENILES PROSECUTED

The 2008 total of **1,650 youth charged** is a significant decrease from the 2007 total of 1,820. Backstrom said this is the sixth 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 1,360 juveniles charged in 2007 to **1,283** juveniles charged in 2008. Juvenile prosecutions in the County actually peaked in 2002, when 2,070 youth were charged with crimes. Dakota County has grown on average about 2% per year over the last decade and is currently home to approximately 400,000 residents. *“Despite the 16% growth³ in the population of 10 to 17-year-olds in Dakota County over the past 10 years, it is a good sign that the number of youth charged with a crime in our community continues to drop,”* Backstrom commented. (See attached chart reflecting the number of juveniles charged with criminal offenses in Dakota County since 1990.)

JUVENILES CHARGED WITH FELONY OFFENSES

Backstrom said the number of juveniles charged with a felony in 2008 decreased to **260** (compared to 334 in 2007) and down from a peak of 420 in 2001.” (See attached chart of juvenile felony offenders for the last ten years.) *Backstrom stated: “To have such a significant decrease in the number of juveniles charged with felonies last year in Dakota County is remarkable given our size and growth over the 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 am proud of the work being done in our schools and the many partnerships developed with our police departments, school resource officers and other prevention and early intervention resources. I believe this commitment to addressing youth problems quickly and proactively is a direct reflection in keeping the numbers of juveniles charged with crime in our community down.”*

JUVENILE CRIMES OF VIOLENCE

The number of charges for **violent juvenile offenses⁴** rose in 2008 to **413** from 371 in 2007 (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 decreased from 246 offenses charged in 2007 to **222** in 2008. *Backstrom commented: “Though the number of violent offenses charged is up slightly in 2008, it is still less today than it was in 1999. This is significant considering the continuing growth of our juvenile population during that time period.”* Backstrom indicated that last year in Dakota County one juvenile was charged with murder.

SCHOOL-RELATED CRIME/VIOLENCE

Backstrom estimates about 25-30% of the juvenile offenses occur 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 react quickly to incidents involving rumored hit lists, weapons being brought to school or notes containing threats to others. In 2008, **23** youth were charged with school-related violent offenses (includes felonies and gross misdemeanors, compared to 18 in 2007). Of those, **11** youth were charged with making terroristic threats, the same number as in 2007. Six youth were charged with possession of a dangerous weapon on school property (dangerous weapons include: BB guns, replica firearms, knives).

The County Attorney’s Office continued to **Prioritize Prosecutions in Schools** (PPS) in 2008 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 which includes trainings for students and staff, community forums, prevention programming and sharing of information, in addition to fast tracking of crimes associated with school activities. Backstrom noted: *“Schools must*

remain safe places for learning and for socializing. By partnering with schools and law enforcement within Dakota County, we ensure a safe and healthy learning environment for students and staff. Quicker prosecution of crimes that occur on school property also sends the message that these acts will be taken seriously. This in itself is a deterrent to future crimes."

PREVENTION, EARLY INTERVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAMS

Prevention of juvenile crime has long been a priority for County Attorney Backstrom, who is on the Board of Fight Crime; Invest in Kids, an organization committed to informing policy-makers and the public on youth prevention and early intervention efforts. Backstrom has also 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 2003-2008). *"I believe the most effective thing we can do to reduce crime in America is to invest our time, resources and energy in our nation's children."*

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, **1,389 juvenile offenders were referred to various accountability programs** as an alternative to juvenile court in 2008.

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: "These programs are designed to appropriately deal with violations by juveniles by emphasizing education, prevention and accountability."* For most youth accountability programs youth must pay for the cost of attending these alternatives to court, pay restitution to the victim, work community work service, write letters of apology and complete a variety of other sanctions within a timely manner. A parent or guardian is also required to attend all youth accountability programs with their child, which we believe is important and necessary to change the problem behavior.

Another program that has been 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 2008, **12-15** 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 still a significant 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. *"The mission of Peer Court is to change illegal activities of juvenile offenders as they take responsibility for their own actions. Peer Court also serves as a great learning experience for the members who serve as jurors of how not to behave,"* Backstrom noted. In 2008, **29** 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 that are curious about or caught lighting a fire. In 2008, **14** Dakota County juveniles (and a parent) were referred to this program. This quarterly educational class, 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 our local fire departments.

JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION INITIATIVES

Backstrom indicated that his Office was involved in numerous crime prevention efforts in 2008. One of those efforts has been to make sure juveniles who are supposed to be in school are actually there. The **Accelerated Court Truancy (ACT)** program, which included Independent School District 197 (West St. Paul, Mendota Heights and part of Eagan), and District 199 (Inver Grove Heights) ended at the end of the 2007-2008 school year. However, the most effective portions of that program were expanded countywide beginning in the 2008-2009 school year. Students with three or more unexcused absences from school are invited 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 students also work with school officials and county truancy officers to identify and address causes for the unexcused absences. The new truancy program is designed to again bring student, parent, school officials and county workers together to try to end the absences without court intervention. However, if this intervention does not stop truancy, a court petition will be filed and the student brought before a judge. 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. The new, county-wide program is designed to begin addressing the causes of truancy earlier and more effectively to reduce the number of court actions necessary. Juvenile court remains the final stop for students whose truancy behavior does not end with these interventions.

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. 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 4th-8th 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 13,000** students, teachers and parents have heard Backstrom's anti-bullying message since 2002. 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."*

Details of the juvenile cases charged by the Dakota County Attorney's Office in 2008 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.

¹ Criminal charges are not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

² An individual may be charged with more than one felony offense in one behavioral incident.

³ The population growth of youth ages 10-17 for the past 10 years is 16%.

⁴ 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.

2008 JUVENILE FELONY OFFENSES**

OFFICE OF DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY JAMES C. BACKSTROM COUNTY ATTORNEY 1560 HIGHWAY 55 HASTINGS, MN 55033-2392	Burglary	Theft Related	Criminal Damage to Property	Sex Related	Dangerous Weapons	Drug Related *	Assault Related	Terroristic Threats	Receiving Stolen Property	Robbery	Unauthorized Use Motor Vehicle	Forgery Related	Kidnapping	Fleeing In A Motor Vehicle	Arson	Gang Crime	Homicide (Including Attempts)	TOTAL CHARGES	TOTAL OFFENDERS
Apple Valley	7	5	3	3	5	3	5	8	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	43	37
Burnsville	6	3	2	1	3	4	0	2	2	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	29	24
Dakota County Sheriff	7	0	1	1	1	3	3	1	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	22	16
Eagan	8	4	11	12	8	6	3	2	1	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	60	52
Farmington	1	1	1	0	6	3	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	15	14
Hastings	13	7	5	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	33	20
Inver Grove Heights	3	6	2	2	2	1	5	2	12	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	40	37
Lakeville	2	3	8	2	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	19	16
Mendota Heights	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
Other Law Enforcement	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	2
Rosemount	0	1	2	5	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	13	13
South St. Paul	1	6	2	3	4	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	21	16
West St. Paul	0	1	0	2	1	0	1	2	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	10	9
TOTAL	48	39	37	32	30	25	23	20	16	15	8	7	4	3	3	1	1	312	260

* 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.

2008 JUVENILE GROSS MISDEMEANOR OFFENSES**

OFFICE OF DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY JAMES C. BACKSTROM COUNTY ATTORNEY 1560 HIGHWAY 55 HASTINGS, MN 55033-2392 651-438-4438	Obstructing Justice	Criminal Damage to Property	Sex Related	Assault-Related	Theft	Forgery Related	Dangerous Weapons	Traffic Related	Stolen Property	Burglary	Disorderly Conduct	Gang Crime	Criminal Vehicular Injury	Stalking Related	Escape From Custody	Furnishing Alcohol to a Minor	TOTAL CHARGES	TOTAL OFFENDERS
Apple Valley	9	1	3	1	5	1	5	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	28	23
Burnsville	3	0	2	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	10	9
Dakota County Sheriff	1	2	0	10	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	16	8
Eagan	4	8	2	1	2	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	13
Farmington	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	10	10
Hastings	3	1	1	2	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	8
Inver Grove Heights	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	4
Lakeville	1	1	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	8	6
Mendota Heights	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Other Law Enforcement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rosemount	2	1	3	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	8
South St. Paul	2	2	1	1	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	12	10
West St. Paul	2	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	6
TOTAL	28	18	18	18	17	8	7	6	5	3	3	2	1	1	1	1	137	107

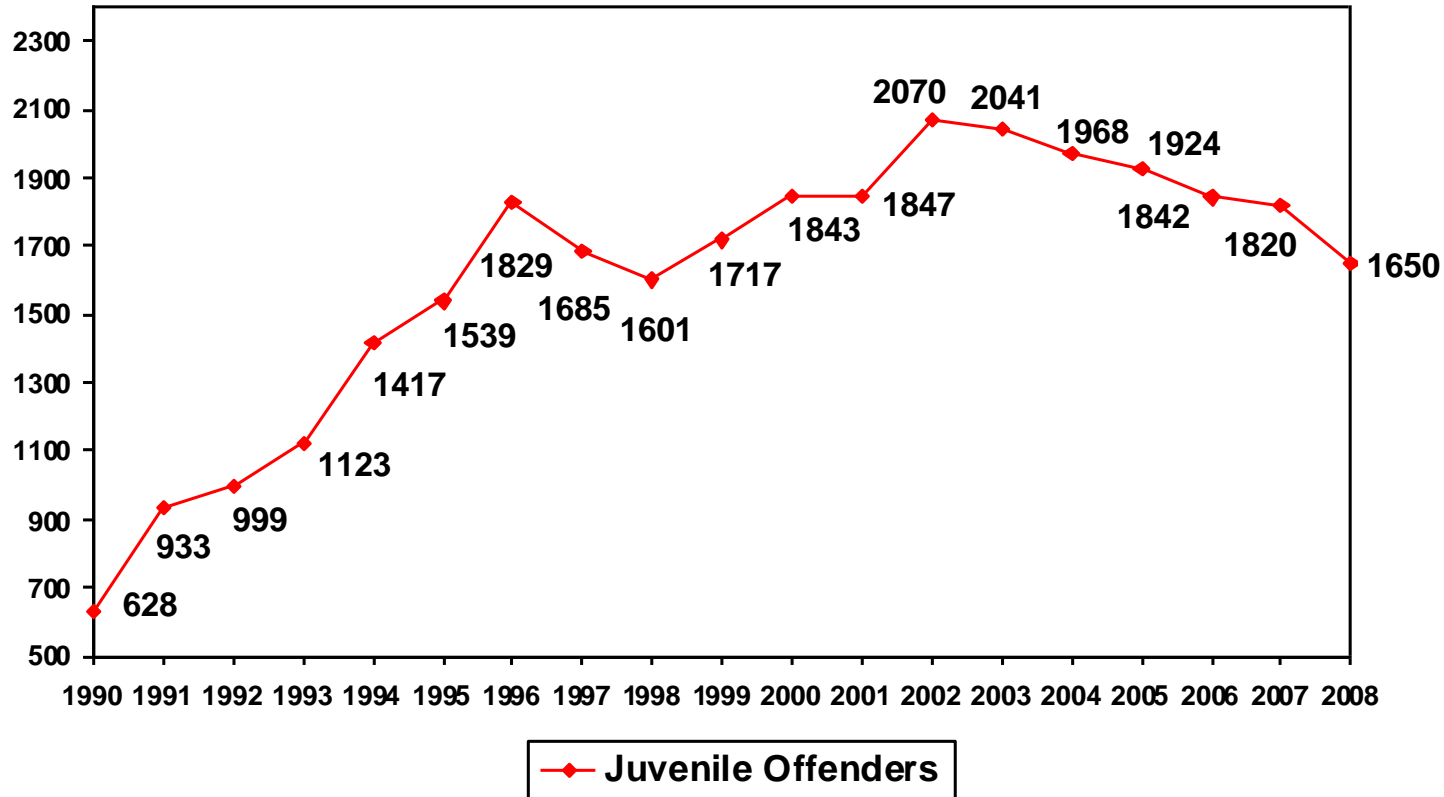
** Numbers in all categories include charges of attempts to commit the crime.

2008 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	Criminal Damage to Property	Consumption/Possession of Alcohol	Obstructing Justice (Non-Traffic)	Traffic Misdemeanors	Traffic Citations	Burglary; Trespassing	Tampering with a Motor Vehicle	Ordinance Violation/Non-weapon	Stolen Property	Possess Small Amount Marijuana-Petty	Public Nuisance	Ordinance Violation/Weapon Related	Legend Drugs & Equipment	Dangerous Weapons	Violation of an OFP or Harassment Order	Arson	Sex Related	TOTAL CHARGES	TOTAL OFFENDERS
Apple Valley	106	53	32	20	14	16	16	11	7	9	4	10	1	3	4	3	0	1	0	0	0	310	231
Burnsville	27	84	20	7	12	9	5	18	1	1	2	3	4	1	0	1	0	2	2	1	0	200	158
Dakota County Sheriff	59	14	23	6	10	4	2	0	5	1	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	128	97
Eagan	45	45	36	27	14	9	12	10	10	9	6	0	5	4	2	8	3	0	0	0	1	246	177
Farmington	35	24	14	6	3	9	4	3	1	6	6	1	6	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	121	100
Hastings	24	42	15	9	5	4	6	2	2	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	115	75
Inver Grove Heights	33	15	27	12	5	8	2	5	3	8	0	2	2	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	127	88
Lakeville	25	36	13	13	12	6	12	6	6	1	5	3	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	142	105
Mendota Heights	6	2	3	0	1	0	0	1	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	15
Other Law Enforcement	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	3
Rosemount	34	10	10	9	7	8	4	2	3	2	1	1	0	0	4	1	2	0	0	0	0	98	66
South St. Paul	43	8	19	13	4	4	8	3	1	3	6	5	3	2	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	129	98
West St. Paul	11	45	10	3	1	3	4	6	1	2	0	0	2	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	92	70
TOTAL	448	378	222	126	88	80	75	67	47	43	35	27	25	16	14	14	14	7	3	1	1	1731	1283

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

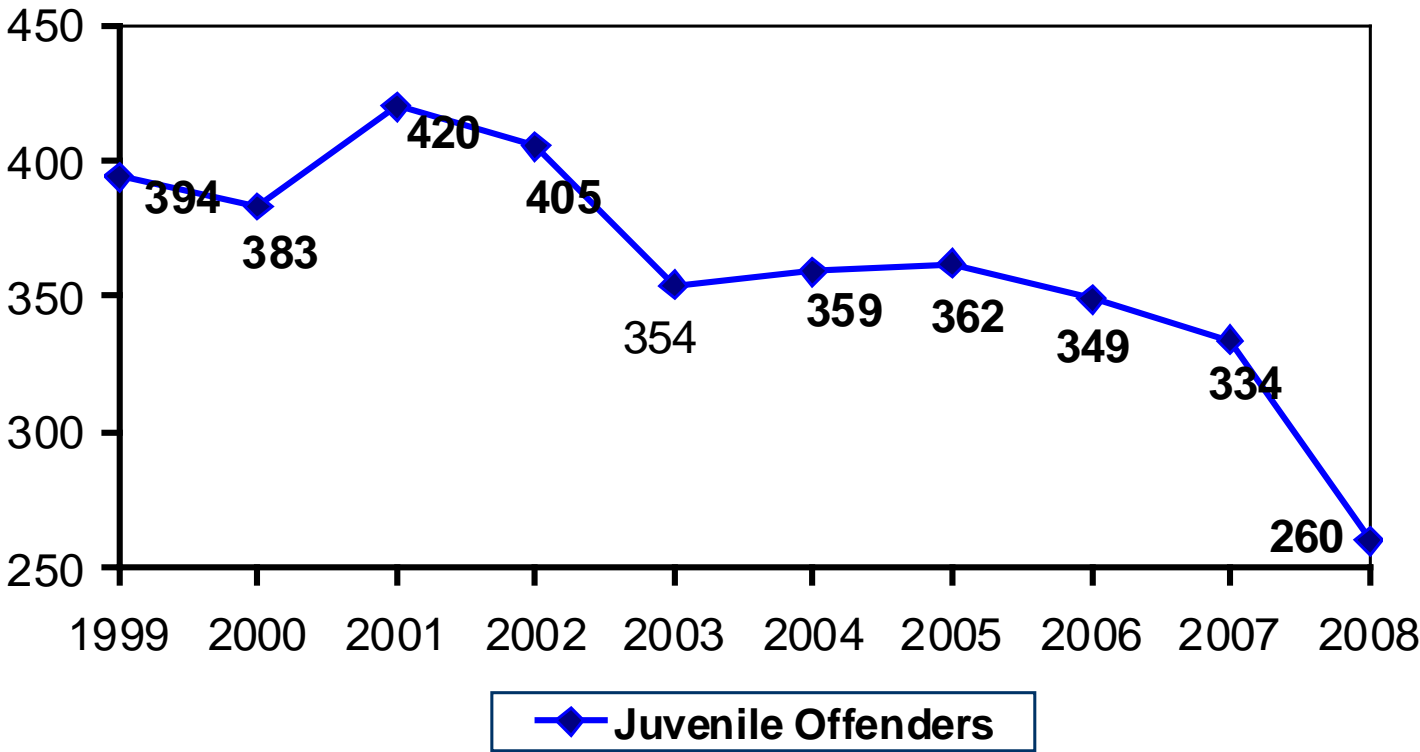
RECENT TRENDS IN **JUVENILE DELINQUENCY PROSECUTIONS** Filed by the Dakota County Attorney's Office



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

Juvenile Offenders Felony Level Offenses 1999-2008



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

JAMES C. BACKSTROM
DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY

Juvenile Violent Crime Charges in Dakota County

**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>
1999	426
2000	399
2001	430
2002	487
2003	454
2004	375
2005	407
2006	382
2007	371
2008	413
Ten Year Average ...	414

o:\admin\stats\08JuvViolentCrimeCharges.doc

* 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

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Felonies	22	28	35	30	23	30	26	30	16	30
Gross Misdemeanors	5	12	6	3	8	17	7	15	9	7
Misdemeanors	17	10	8	4	11	11	2	10	3	7
Ordinance Violations	8	15	12	11	9	5	19	11	8	14
TOTAL:	52	65	61	48	51	63	54	66	36	58

Ten-Year Average is 55.4

Compiled by:
James C. Backstrom
Dakota County Attorney