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**NEWS RELEASE**

**2009 DAKOTA COUNTY JUVENILE PROSECUTION STATISTICS RELEASED**

**OVERVIEW**

Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom has released statistics for 2009 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 2009.** (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 2009 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**<sup>1</sup> with criminal offenses by his office decreased slightly from 1,650<sup>2</sup> in 2008 to **1,645** in 2009.
- The number of **felony level juvenile offenders** charged also decreased 10% from 260 in 2008 to **233** in 2009.

**2009 INCREASE/DECREASE IN JUVENILES CHARGED (BY CITY)**

The following reflects all levels of juveniles charged with crimes based upon referrals from individual cities and the Dakota County Sheriff's Office:

Apple Valley **decreased** from 291 to **268**  
Burnsville **increased** from 191 to **238**  
Dakota County Sheriff **decreased** from 121 to 95  
Eagan **decreased** from 242 to **190**  
Farmington **decreased** from 124 to **93**  
Hastings **decreased** from 103 to **70**  
Inver Grove Heights **decreased** from 129 to **119**  
Lakeville **increased** from 127 to **151**  
Mendota Heights **increased** from 21 to **34**  
Rosemount **increased** from 87 to **125**  
South St. Paul **decreased** from 124 to **112**  
West St. Paul **increased** from 85 to **142**

## **OVERALL DECREASE IN JUVENILES PROSECUTED**

The 2009 total of **1,645 youth charged** is a slight decrease from the 2008 total of 1,650. Backstrom said this is the seventh 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, up from 1,283 juveniles charged in 2008 to **1,320** juveniles charged in 2009. 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. *“It is a good sign that the number of youth charged with a crime in our community continues to drop as the annual population estimate of 10-17 year-olds has increased by 1% each year over the past 10 years,”* 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 2009 decreased to **233** (compared to 260 in 2008) and down from a peak of 420 in 2001.” (See attached chart of juvenile felony offenders for the last ten years.) *Backstrom stated: “A 10% decrease in the number of juveniles charged with felonies last year in Dakota County is remarkable given our size and growth over the years. I am proud of the work being done in our schools and the many partnerships developed with our police departments, school resource officers and the implementation of other prevention and intervention programs. I believe this commitment to addressing youth problems quickly and proactively is directly reflected in the drops we have experience in recent years in the numbers of juveniles charged with crimes in our community.”*

## **JUVENILE CRIMES OF VIOLENCE**

The number of charges for **violent juvenile offenses**<sup>3</sup> also dropped last year. In 2009, **380** charges involving crime of violence were filed against juvenile offenders in Dakota County, compared to 413 the year before (a decrease of 8%). (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 actually increased slightly from 222 offenses charged in 2008 to **234** in 2009. *Backstrom commented: “The number of violent offenses charged in 2009 is below our 10-year average for these types of charges (410), which is a positive reflection of the overall safety of our community.”*

## **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 threats of violence, weapons being brought to school or other crimes. In 2009, **29** youth were charged with school-related violent offenses (includes felonies and gross misdemeanors, compared to 23 in 2008). Of those, **3** youth were charged with making terroristic threats. **17** youth were charged with possession of a dangerous weapon on school property (dangerous weapons include: BB guns, replica firearms, and knives).

The County Attorney’s Office continued to **Prioritize Prosecutions in Schools** (PPS) in 2009 by prioritizing and quickly prosecuting crimes that occur in school or at school-related activities. Since the PPS initiative began 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 students and staff. By partnering with schools and law enforcement within Dakota County, we ensure a safe and healthy learning environment at area schools. 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 a member of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, a national 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 lower-level property crimes. A more intensive program for second time users of alcohol or small amounts of marijuana is also available. In total, **1,258 juvenile offenders were referred to various accountability programs** as an alternative to juvenile court in 2009. This past year the program for tobacco offenders had to be eliminated due to staffing and referral shortages.

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, do 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 2009, **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 proactively address illegal activities of juvenile offenders by encouraging them to take responsibility for their own actions. Peer Court also serves as a great learning experience for the members who serve as jurors in the process,"* Backstrom noted. In 2009, **36** 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 exhibiting inappropriate behavior about or actually caught lighting fires. In 2009, **31** Dakota County juveniles 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 local Dakota County fire departments.

## **JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION INITIATIVES**

Backstrom indicated that his Office was involved in numerous crime prevention efforts in 2009. 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. The most effective portions of that program, however, were expanded in a **new countywide truancy program** during 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 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.

County Attorney Backstrom launched an **anti-bullying initiative** during the 2002-03 school year, which has been presented to over 14,000 students, staff and parents. 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 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."* Educating students on the dangers of bullying and harassing behaviors is the cornerstone to the success of reducing aggressive behavior in our schools. This past year Backstrom expanded the program to include the dangers of bullying on the internet, cell phones and even "sexting". *"We need to stay ahead of the curve to keep young people out of the criminal justice system. Today one keystroke on a computer can result in an inappropriate message or picture being sent which could lead to criminal charges,"* Backstrom added.

Details of the juvenile cases charged by the Dakota County Attorney's Office in 2009 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 651-438-4438.**

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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 the number of juvenile offenders. A juvenile offender may be charged with more than one offense in a single behavioral incident.

## 2009 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	8	5	5	5	3	1	1	1	0	3	2	3	0	1	1	0	0	39	35
Burnsville	9	3	0	2	9	2	1	4	3	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	37	33
Dakota County Sheriff	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
Eagan	1	3	2	4	1	10	4	0	1	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	31	29
Farmington	11	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	18	14
Hastings	1	0	1	0	1	8	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	10
Inver Grove Heights	2	1	5	2	5	1	1	1	4	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	26	23
Lakeville	17	14	8	3	0	2	8	2	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	59	41
Mendota Heights	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
Other Law Enforcement	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Rosemount	3	0	0	2	1	2	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	10
South St. Paul	3	0	0	1	3	6	2	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	18
West St. Paul	2	0	0	1	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	8	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>233</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.

## 2009 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	Abuse/Neglect of Minor	Furnishing Alcohol to a Minor	TOTAL CHARGES	TOTAL OFFENDERS
Apple Valley	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	15	10
Burnsville	4	6	1	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	18	17
Dakota County Sheriff	1	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	8
Eagan	7	1	1	4	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	12
Farmington	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
Hastings	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Inver Grove Heights	4	2	1	1	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	7
Lakeville	2	3	2	0	3	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	15	12
Mendota Heights	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Other Law Enforcement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rosemount	0	6	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	11	10
South St. Paul	0	0	0	2	1	1	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	8
West St. Paul	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	20	20	9	19	12	10	10	4	3	1	1	0	0	1	1	3	114	92

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

## 2009 JUVENILE MISDEMEANOR & PETTY MISDEMEANOR OFFENSES\*\*

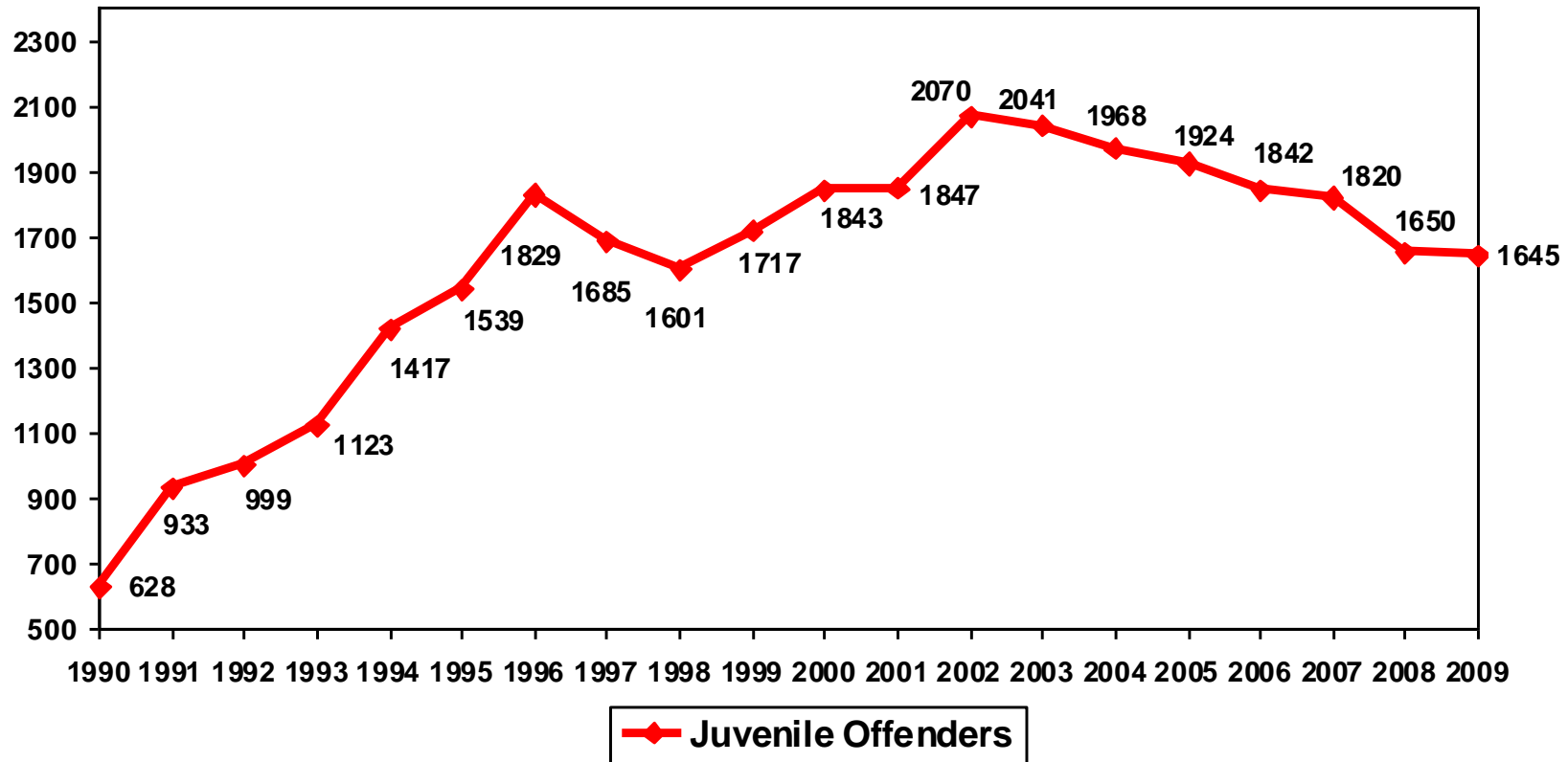
OFFICE OF DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY  JAMES C. BACKSTROM COUNTY ATTORNEY 1560 HIGHWAY 55 HASTINGS, MN 55033-2392 651-438-4438	Disorderly Conduct Related	Theft	Assault Related	Petty Offenses	Criminal Damage to Property	Consumption/Possession of Alcohol	Obstructing Justice (Non-Traffic)	Traffic Misdemeanors	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	DNR, Game & Fish	TOTAL CHARGES	TOTAL OFFENDERS
Apple Valley	117	48	32	12	8	7	6	10	12	3	5	1	1	2	1	6	2	0	1	2	0	0	276	223
Burnsville	26	104	20	18	6	15	13	21	4	10	5	1	7	3	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	257	188
Dakota County Sheriff	51	7	24	6	10	6	6	2	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	121	82
Eagan	38	50	38	23	4	13	16	13	7	5	9	4	4	4	1	0	2	1	1	1	0	0	234	149
Farmington	29	14	15	5	4	2	5	2	1	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	4	2	1	0	0	89	74
Hastings	14	19	17	6	13	6	8	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	86	59
Inver Grove Heights	32	20	28	9	5	7	9	3	4	0	1	0	6	3	2	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	132	89
Lakeville	19	40	16	20	7	8	6	11	11	1	5	0	4	1	2	0	1	0	0	3	1	0	136	98
Mendota Heights	14	5	8	1	0	1	1	0	3	2	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	38	29
Other Law Enforcement	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	5
Rosemount	33	18	11	13	2	8	8	4	15	2	5	13	3	1	1	0	10	1	0	0	0	2	150	105
South St. Paul	32	8	19	11	1	12	12	14	5	4	4	4	2	1	2	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	136	86
West St. Paul	26	92	6	3	2	4	3	11	2	2	1	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	157	133
<b>TOTAL</b>	431	426	234	127	63	90	93	94	67	33	36	27	33	18	11	7	20	12	6	8	1	2	1819	1320

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

# Juvenile Offenders

## All Levels of Juvenile Offenses Charged

### 1990-2009

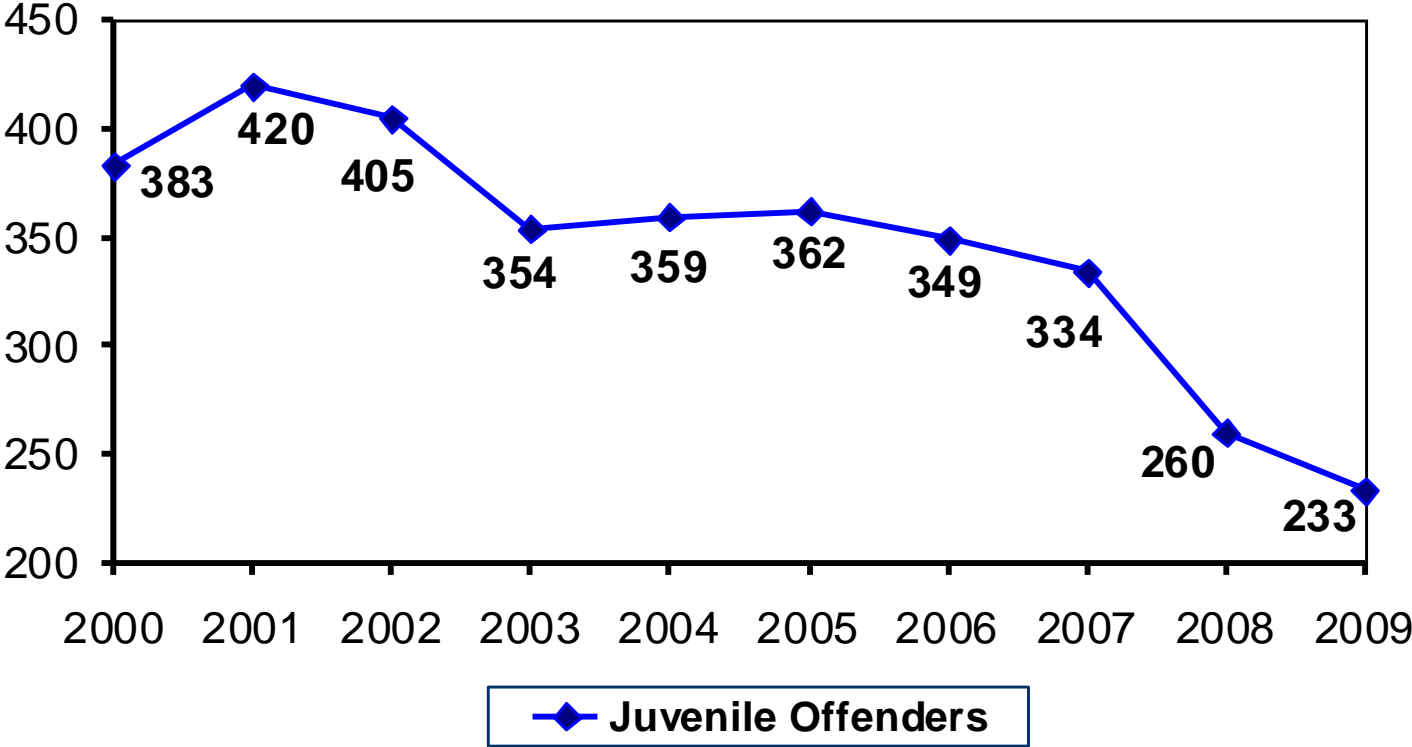


These include some petty misdemeanors and all misdemeanors, gross misdemeanors and felonies committed by Dakota County youth under the age of 18 in Dakota County.

Compiled by:  
**James C. Backstrom**  
Dakota County Attorney



# Juvenile Offenders Felony Level Offenses 2000-2009



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 Offenders**

## **Violent Crime Charges**

**2000-2009**

**(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>
2000 .....	399
2001 .....	430
2002 .....	487
2003 .....	454
2004 .....	375
2005 .....	407
2006 .....	382
2007 .....	371
2008 .....	413
2009 .....	380
<b>Ten Year Average ...</b>	<b>410</b>

**Compiled by:**  
**James C. Backstrom**  
**Dakota County Attorney**

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\* The statistics do NOT include any juveniles prosecuted as adults for any of these crimes.

# Juvenile Offenders Dangerous Weapons- Related Charges (2000-2009)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
<b>Felonies</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Gross Misdemeanors</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Misdemeanors</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Ordinance Violations</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>TOTAL:</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>	<b>58</b>	<b>54</b>

**Ten-Year Average is 55.6**

**Compiled by:  
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