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March 11, 2014

NEWS RELEASE

2013 DAKOTA COUNTY JUVENILE PROSECUTION STATISTICS RELEASED

OVERVIEW

Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom has released statistics for 2013 involving **juvenile prosecutions** handled by his Office. (These statistics 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 2013 remain under investigation by law enforcement agencies.) In Minnesota, County Attorneys prosecute all crimes committed by juveniles (youth 10-17 years old) including felonies, gross misdemeanors, misdemeanors and some petty misdemeanors. Backstrom pointed out the following highlights:

- The number of **juvenile offenders** charged¹ with all levels of crimes decreased from 1,498 in 2012 to **1,119** in 2013² (**955**, or **85%**, of these cases involved misdemeanors).
- The number of **juvenile offenders** charged with felony-level crimes decreased from 134 in 2012 to **111** in 2013.

2013 JUVENILES CRIMES PROSECUTED DECREASE

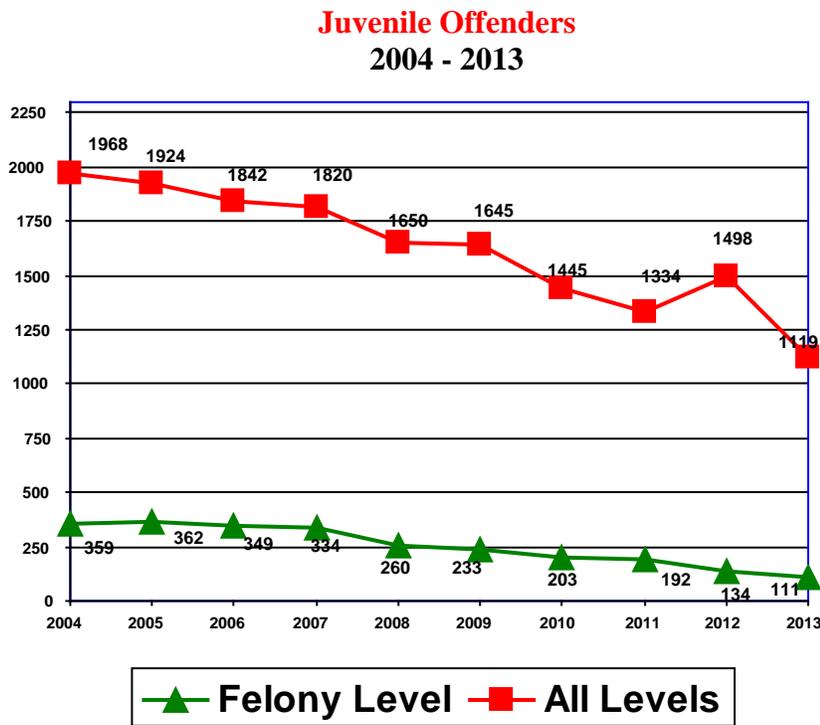
Backstrom indicated that Dakota County experienced a decrease in the overall number of juveniles prosecuted for all levels of criminal acts. The following reflects the number of juveniles charged with all levels of crimes based upon referrals from individual cities and the Dakota County Sheriff's Office. Backstrom emphasized that most of the charges filed were for misdemeanor level offenses (1,249 juveniles charged in 2012 to **955** in 2013):

Apple Valley **decreased** from 297 to **173**
Burnsville **decreased** from 182 to **166**
Dakota County Sheriff **decreased** from 139 to **120**
Eagan **decreased** from 184 to **137**
Farmington **decreased** from 61 to **42**
Hastings **decreased** from 97 to **69**
Inver Grove Heights **decreased** from 106 to **98**
Lakeville **decreased** from 141 to **71**
Mendota Heights **increased** from 13 to **15**
Rosemount **decreased** from 53 to **52**
South St. Paul **decreased** from 121 to **97**
West St. Paul **decreased** from 88 to **72**

Backstrom stated: “With the exception of last year, we have seen a steady decrease in the number of juveniles charged with felonies each year in Dakota County, which is remarkable given our size and growth over the last decade. I am proud of the great work being done in our schools, law enforcement and community organization and the partnerships we have developed to address these youth issues. We have also implemented a number of prevention and early intervention programs. I believe this commitment to addressing youth problems quickly and proactively is a direct reflection in the decline we have experienced in the last decade in the numbers of juveniles charged with crimes in our community.”

JUVENILES CHARGED WITH FELONY OFFENSES

Backstrom said the number of juveniles charged with a felony decreased slightly to **111** in 2013 compared to 134 in 2012. (See chart below.) “Felonies are the most serious crimes charged by this Office and can include various crimes of violence,” Backstrom said. “It is a very good sign that the number of juveniles charged with felony level crimes has dropped each year over the last decade, and in 2013 was less than 1/3 of the number of youth charged with these serious crimes in 2004,” Backstrom added.



JUVENILE CRIMES OF VIOLENCE

In 2013 there were **261** juveniles charged with violent offenses³ in Dakota County. Backstrom said the most common violent crime committed by juveniles was misdemeanor assault (235 juveniles charged in 2012 to **198** in 2013):

Violent Crime Offenders

Assault	216
Dangerous Weapons	18
Sex Offenses	14
Terroristic Threats	9
Robbery	2
Criminal Vehicular Homicide	2
TOTAL:	261

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 about the importance of youth prevention and early intervention efforts. Backstrom also serves as a co-chair of the Juvenile Justice Committee for the National District Attorneys Association. Backstrom commented: *"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. We accomplish this with effective and appropriate early intervention efforts aimed at preventing crime before it occurs and intervening quickly when problems arise."*

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. These programs resolve these cases outside of the court process allowing youth to learn from their mistakes and avoid a criminal record. In 2013, a total of **798** juvenile offenders were referred to various accountability programs as an alternative to juvenile court compared to 862 in 2012.

Backstrom commented: *"Youth accountability programs are designed to appropriately deal with youth who commit certain first or second-time non-violent offenses. These youth are held responsible for their criminal behavior outside of the criminal process."* Each program requires the involvement of a parent or guardian and focuses on education and prevention. For most youth accountability programs, the 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.

The **Peer Court program**, a joint project of the Dakota County Attorney, Community Corrections and the District Court, operated in seven area high schools in 2013: Eastview (Apple Valley), Burnsville, Hastings, Simley (Inver Grove Heights), Lakeville North and South and South St. Paul. In Peer Court teens serve as jurors and become personally involved in resolving the problem of juvenile crime in their community. Backstrom noted: *"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 students who serve as jurors in the process."* In 2013, **33** juveniles were referred to Peer Court under the direction of Judge Joseph Carter.

JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION INITIATIVES

County Attorney Backstrom continued his **anti-bullying initiative** which he began during the 2002-03 school year. To date this program has been presented to over 18,000 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. This past year Backstrom also continued to address issues facing middle and high school students concerning increasing use of technology. Backstrom commented: *"Making good choices about sending a text message, email or other form of technology is very important for teens today. Educating students on the potential dangers of bullying, harassing or aggressive behaviors, and the dangers associated with "sexting" and how this conduct could lead to criminal charges is important in our efforts to keep our kids safe."*

Other prevention programs/efforts of the Dakota County Attorney's Office include the 26th annual Anti-Drug/Violence Poster and Calendar Contest, resources on internet safety, materials on keeping teens safe when driving; materials relating to dangers of chemical abuse, mental health and suicide prevention forums throughout Dakota County and ongoing support to the Safe & Drug Free School Coordinators.

Details of the juvenile cases charged by the Dakota County Attorney's Office in 2013 are broken down on the attached chart by type of crime and jurisdiction. This information is also available on the Dakota County Attorney website at: <http://www.co.dakota.mn.us/LawJustice/CrimeReports/Pages/default.aspx>.

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 offense in one behavioral incident.

³ Violent juvenile offenses include all levels of homicide, attempted homicide, assault, offenses involving dangerous weapons, kidnapping, robbery, sex offenses and terroristic threats, including attempts. The statistics in this section reflect the number of juvenile offenders. A juvenile offender may be charged with more than one offense in a single behavioral incident.

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**Dakota County Attorney's Office
2013 Juvenile Statistics
Cases Charged**

		TOTALS	Crim Vetic Homicide/Injury	Escape/Obstruct Justiced/Tamper with Witness	Public Health & Safety/Coercion/Fail to Register	Sex Related	Strangulation/Assault Related	Burglary/Trespassing Related	Contributing to Del/CHIPS	Crim Damage to Property	Disorderly Conduct Related	DL Offenses	Drug Related	Fleeing	Forgery/FTC Fraud	Harassment/Stalking	Hunting/Fishing/DNR	Leave Scene/Fail to Report Accident	Motor Vehicle Theft/Tampering	Non-Alcohol Traffic	Ordinance - Weapon	Ordinance - Non-Weapon	Public Health	Robbery	Stolen Property Related	Offenses by Minors	Terroristic Threats	Theft Related	Vehicle Offenses	Weapons/Explosives	Alcohol Related Traffic	Arson/Neg. Fires	
West St Paul PD	TOTALS	Charges Cases	97 72	0 0	3 3	2 1	0 0	6 5	8 7	0 0	1 1	12 12	0 0	5 4	3 3	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	4 4	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 1	0 0	48 48	0 0	1 1	0 0	3 2	
	Felony	Charges Cases	9 8	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	1 1	5 4	0 0	1 1	0 0	0 0	1 1	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	1 1	0 0	0 0	
	Gross Misdemeanor	Charges Cases	4 4	0 0	2 2	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	2 2
	Misdemeanor	Charges Cases	75 62	0 0	1 1	2 1	0 0	5 4	3 3	0 0	0 0	12 12	0 0	0 0	3 3	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	48 48	0 0	0 0	0 0	1 1
	Petty Misdemeanor	Charges Cases	9 8	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	4 3	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	4 4	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 1	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
Other Agencies	TOTALS	Charges Cases	4 4	0 0	1 1	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	1 1	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	2 2	0 0	0 0	0 0	
	Misdemeanor	Charges Cases	4 4	0 0	1 1	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	1 1	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	2 2	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	

- 1 A juvenile may have multiple charges for the same incident. Numbers in all categories include charges of attempts to commit the crime.
- 2 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.
- 3 Petty offenses may include ordinance and traffic violations. Some petty misdemeanors are handled by a city attorney.
- 4 Accurate case totals cannot be calculated by manually adding cases together.