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NEWS RELEASE

2014 DAKOTA COUNTY JUVENILE PROSECUTION STATISTICS RELEASED

OVERVIEW

Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom has released statistics for 2014 involving **juvenile prosecutions** handled by his Office. In Minnesota, County Attorneys prosecute all crimes committed by juveniles (youth 10-17 years old) including felonies, gross misdemeanors, misdemeanors and some petty misdemeanors. These numbers 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 2014 remain under investigation by law enforcement agencies. Backstrom pointed out the following highlights:

- The number of **juvenile offenders** charged¹ with all levels of crimes decreased from 1,119 in 2013 to **1,076** in 2014². Of these cases, **826** (77%) involved misdemeanors (down from 955 juveniles charged with misdemeanors in 2013).
- The number of **juvenile offenders** charged with felony-level crimes increased from 111 in 2013 to 152 in 2014 (an increase of 37%).

2014 JUVENILES CHARGED BY JURISDICTION

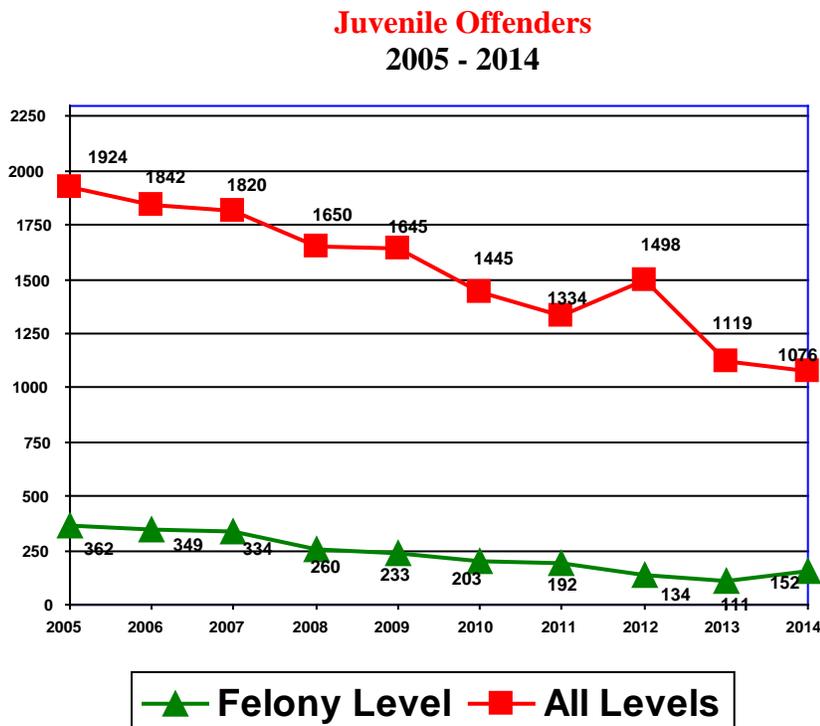
The following reflects the number of juveniles charged with all levels of crimes based upon referrals from individual cities and the Dakota County Sheriff's Office. Backstrom emphasized that 77% of these cases were charged as misdemeanor level offenses:

Apple Valley **decreased** from 173 to 136
Burnsville **decreased** from 166 to 159
Dakota County Sheriff **decreased** from 120 to 99
Eagan **decreased** from 137 to 118
Farmington **decreased** from 42 to 33
Hastings **increased** from 69 to 85
Inver Grove Heights **increased** from 98 to 110
Lakeville **increased** from 71 to 87
Mendota Heights **decreased** from 15 to 11
Rosemount **stayed the same** at 52
South St. Paul **decreased** from 97 to 89
West St. Paul **increased** from 72 to 80

JUVENILES CHARGED WITH FELONY OFFENSES

Backstrom said the number of juveniles charged with a felony increased to 152 in 2014 compared to 111 in 2013. Backstrom stated: *“Felonies are the most serious crimes charged by this Office and can include various crimes of violence. While an increase in this category is always of concern, it needs to be kept in mind that for the last eight years there has been a steady decrease in juvenile felony level charges in Dakota County. The 152 juveniles charged with felonies last year is less than half the number of juvenile offenders charged in 2005 with such offenses.”*

The following chart contrasts juvenile offenders charged at all crime levels and those charged with felony offenses over the last 10 years. *“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 the issues that youth face and I believe our ongoing commitment to addressing youth problems quickly and proactively is a direct reflection in this decline.”*



JUVENILE CRIMES OF VIOLENCE

In 2014 there were 274 juveniles charged with violent offenses³ in Dakota County. Backstrom said the most common violent crime committed by juveniles was misdemeanor assault (198 juveniles charged in 2013 to 132 in 2014):

Violent Crime Offenders

Offense	2014	2013
Assault non-felony	155	198
Assault Felony	21	18
Dangerous Weapons	38	18
Sex-Related	31	14
Terroristic Threats	21	9
Robbery	19	2
Criminal Vehicular Homicide	3	2

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 is a member of the Minnesota-based Youth Intervention Programs Association (YIPA). 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."*

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. These programs resolve these cases outside of the court process allowing youth to learn from their mistakes and avoid a criminal record. In 2014, a total of 701 juvenile offenders were referred to various accountability programs as an alternative to juvenile court (compared to 702 in 2013). Included for the first time in 2014 in this category were 37 juvenile offenders referred to a newly created Youth Accountability Program for school-related disorderly conduct incidents. This new program was created as part of the County Attorney's involvement in the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI). This program was first created in 2008 and has been instrumental in reducing the number of youth detained in the juvenile detention center if appropriate alternative placements are available without jeopardizing the public safety and addressing other important issues involving juvenile criminal activity in Dakota County.

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. 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."*

The **Peer Court program**, a joint project of the Dakota County Attorney's Office, Community Corrections and District Court, operated in seven area high schools in 2014 at: Eastview (Apple Valley), Burnsville, Hastings, Farmington, Lakeville North and South, and South St. Paul. High school students serve as jurors and identify appropriate sanctions for the juvenile offenders referred to the program. In this way Peer Court encourages youth to assist in addressing 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 2014, **29** juveniles were referred to Peer Court under the direction of First Judicial District Court Judge Joseph Carter.

JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION INITIATIVES

County Attorney Backstrom continued his **anti-bullying initiative** which he began during the 2002-03 school year. Since that time, over 19,000 students, staff and parents, have learned of local, state and national resources for preventing these bullying behaviors. It has been reported that 160,000 children skip school every day in America⁴ 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 24⁵. As part of this program, Backstrom also addresses 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 internet communication is very important for students today. Educating young people about the potential dangers of bullying, harassing or aggressive behaviors, and the dangers associated with inappropriate postings on social networking sites is important in our efforts to keep our kids safe."*

Other prevention programs/efforts of the Dakota County Attorney's Office include the 27th annual Anti-Drug/Violence Poster Contest; sharing resources on internet safety, keeping teens safe when driving, and the dangers of chemical abuse; coordinating mental health forums throughout Dakota County; and providing ongoing support to the Safe & Drug Free School coordinators.

Details of the juvenile cases charged by the Dakota County Attorney's Office in 2014 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 crime in the same or separate 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 charged with a crime of violence. A juvenile offender may be charged with more than one violent crime in the same or separate behavioral incident.

⁴ National Education Association in 1995. Youth risk behavior survey data results.

⁵ For the full report and citations for this brief, see www.fightcrime.org.

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			TOTALS	Alcohol Related Traffic	Arson/Neg. Fires	Burglary/Trespassing Related	Contributing to Del/CHIPS	Crim Damage to Property	Crim Vehic Homicide/Injury	Disorderly Conduct Related	DL Offenses	Drug Related	Escape/Obstruct Justice/Tamper with Witness	Fleeing	Forgery/FTC Fraud	Fugitive From Justice	Gambling	Harassment/Stalking	Hunting/Fishing/DNR	Leave Scene/Fail to Report Accident	Motor Vehicle Theft/Tampering	Non-Alcohol Traffic	Offenses by Minors	Ordinance - Non-Weapon	Ordinance - Weapon	Public Health & Safety/Coercion/Fail to Register	Robbery	Sex Related	Stolen Property Related	Strangulation/Assault Related	Terroristic Threats	Theft Related	Vehicle Offenses	Weapons/Explosives
West St Paul PD	TOTALS	Charges Cases	118 80	2 1	0 0	3 3	0 0	4 4	0 0	12 12	0 0	5 5	8 8	2 2	0 0	1 1	1 1	0 0	0 0	0 0	2 2	3 3	8 8	9 9	0 0	2 2	0 0	7 4	0 0	11 8	1 1	34 34	0 0	3 3
	Felony	Charges Cases	18 11	0 0	0 0	1 1	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	2 2	0 0	0 0	0 0	1 1	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	1 1	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	5 3	0 0	4 2	1 1	2 2	0 0	1 1
	Gross Misdemeanor	Charges Cases	6 5	0 0	0 0	0 0	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	2 1	0 0	1 1	0 0	0 0	0 0	1 1
	Misdemeanor	Charges Cases	84 62	2 1	0 0	2 2	0 0	2 2	0 0	12 12	0 0	0 0	8 8	2 2	0 0	0 0	1 1	0 0	0 0	0 0	1 1	2 2	5 5	6 5	0 0	2 2	0 0	0 0	0 0	6 5	0 0	32 32	0 0	1 1
	Petty Misdemeanor	Charges Cases	10 9	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	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	1 1	3 3	3 3	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
Other Agencies	TOTALS	Charges Cases	17 14	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	2 2	0 0	1 1	0 0	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	2 1	0 0	5 4	0 0	5 5	0 0	0 0
	Felony	Charges Cases	2 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	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	2 1	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
	Gross Misdemeanor	Charges Cases	1 1	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	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	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.