



Stephen M. Howe

A MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY:

As I start the fourteenth year as your District Attorney, I would like to thank the people of Johnson County for the support and trust they have placed in me. I pledge that under my leadership the office will continue to focus on:

1. Pursuing public safety, not politics;
2. Running a professional office both inside and outside the courtroom;
3. Ensuring transparency in decisions made by government.

I have fulfilled these pledges and continue to help make Johnson County a safer place. The job is not over. New challenges are on the horizon. Our office will continue to focus on public safety.

The population of Johnson County has increased greatly. We are the largest jurisdiction in Kansas. The challenges faced by law enforcement and my office have increased accordingly. Safety concerns can be kept to a minimum by working as a team with law enforcement agencies, community partners and the many diverse groups within our county. This has been a major initiative of my office. We have made strides in reaching out to our partners and to the community at large, and it is my intention to continue to build upon this success.

The laws we enforce do not just happen. It would be easy to sit back and wait for the new statute books to arrive every July from Topeka. That is not in my nature. If I see that we have a problem, I strive to be part of the solution. Toward that end, I have advocated for a number of changes to the law which promote public safety and help victims of crime.

My office has worked hard with our criminal justice partners and other government and nonprofit agencies to develop many innovative programs. They include:

- The Lethality Assessment, to reduce recidivism and protect domestic violence victims;
- FAST teams, to protect our elderly population;
- Veteran's Treatment Court, to assist Veterans;
- The Co-Responder Program, to avoid incarceration of the mentally ill;
- Mental Health Diversion, to assist seriously mentally ill involved in the criminal justice system;
- NICHE Records Management System, to standardize the police reports and their submission to our office; and
- Leading efforts to create a Family Justice Center.

While we have placed great emphasis on protecting the most vulnerable of our community, we have also made it a priority to expand our efforts to combat two growing areas of criminal activity - white collar crime and violent crime directly associated with the sale of illegal narcotics.

It has been an honor to serve as your District Attorney. Our work over the past thirteen years has resulted in a professional office with a renewed focus on achieving justice through the fair and open application of the law and evidence.



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WHO WE ARE

The District Attorney is both a state constitutional officer and a locally elected official. The DA's Office represents the "People of the State of Kansas" in the prosecution of criminal cases and in various civil actions. We work closely with the police agencies of Johnson County, providing and gaining support toward public safety. In addition to these services, the DA's Office provides a number of programs and services toward community education, law enforcement training, and victim services.

The District Attorney's Office seeks to protect the safety of the public through a fair application of the law. The office seeks to achieve this by implementing the following values:

- Earn and maintain public trust by exhibiting personal integrity and professionalism,
- Advocate for victims' rights,
- Cooperate with partner agencies,
- Responsibly manage public funds, and
- Treat all individuals with fairness and sensitivity.

K.S.A. 22a-101 establishes the District Attorney of the 10th Judicial District. K.S.A. 22a-104 requires the District Attorney "to prosecute or defend, on behalf of the people... all matters arising under the laws of this state, and such civil matters... in which the state or any county in such judicial district is a party or has an interest."

CASE TRENDS

In 2021 case filings in several categories increased. Our office saw a 2.5% increase in domestic violence and a 12.6% increase in adult criminal case filings. We saw our largest increase in Child In Need of Care (CINC) cases, a 21.8% increase, which includes truancy cases.

WHAT WE DO

In 2021 the District Attorney's Office consisted of 117 employees, including one District Attorney, 38 Assistant District Attorneys, 9 Legal Interns, and 69 support staff. With these resources in place, the Johnson County District Attorney's Office:

- Reviewed 12,148 cases for filing;
- Filed 3,223 criminal cases;
- Filed 1,833 domestic violence cases;
- Filed 1,091 juvenile offender cases;
- Filed 230 Non-Truancy & 336 Truancy Child in Need of Care actions;
- Prosecuted 10,291 traffic citations;
- Diverted 510 domestic violence and criminal cases and 1,650 non-DUI traffic cases;
- Served 9,067 new victims entering the justice system;
- Filed 309 Care & Treatment cases;
- Provided 37,789 victim notifications;
- Filed 22 appellate briefs and petitions for review;
- Handled 388 consumer fraud complaints resulting in restitution ordered or mediated in the amount of \$262,911.60;
- Helped facilitate the entry of numerous low-level juvenile offenders into a wide variety of diversion/immediate intervention programs;
- Assisted with 532 protection orders;
- Review Kansas open record & open meeting complaints.

ASSISTING LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Johnson County District Attorney's Office works very closely with our law enforcement agencies to assist them in their investigations. This includes assisting them with search warrants and inquisitional subpoenas. In 2021 our office handled 629 search warrants, a 21% increase from 2020. Our office handled 907 inquisitional subpoenas. Over the last two years we saw a 36% increase in these requests. Working together on these matters helps us protect our community and hold offenders accountable.

POLICE ACADEMY TRAINING

Our office encourages staff and attorneys to engage with our larger professional community. To that end, our assistant district attorneys teach 17 courses to police recruits. This translates to 57 hours of teaching per academy session for a total of 171 hours per year. Some of our ADAs have been teaching their classes for decades, to generations of Johnson County law enforcement recruits.

Additionally, many of our attorneys are subject matter experts who teach stand alone classes or seminars in such subjects as ethics, domestic violence prosecution, economic crime prevention, and other areas of Kansas law such as KOMA/KORA.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

"I believe we can make a difference in the courtroom, but also out in our community. That is why Johnson County District Attorney's Office staff volunteer thousands of hours of time a year to various private/public, groups and non for profit agencies to make Johnson County a safe and vibrant community."

- Stephen M. Howe, Johnson County District Attorney

CRIMINAL JUSTICE ADVISORY COUNCIL (CJAC)

The District Attorney's Office is a member of the Criminal Justice Advisory Council. We also participate in several of their subcommittees including: pre-trial stakeholders; JCAB; Disproportionate Minority Contact and Justice and Mental Health Work Group.

These groups are a partnership of criminal justice agencies, local government and members of the public. The goal of these committees is to:

- Reduce the number of mentally ill in the court system;
- Maintain public safety;
- Reduce recidivism;
- Ensure there is not disproportionate minority contacts.

These efforts are the reason why Johnson County is an "innovator county" as declared by the Council of State Governments.

VIRTUAL COURT HEARINGS

The Johnson County District Attorney's Office, Justice Information Management Systems (JIMS) and the District Courts have continued to successfully conducted tens of thousands of virtual court hearings throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This has been vitally important to be able to keep as many cases as possible moving through the criminal justice system. This has benefited victims and defendants alike by reducing the amount of time needed to appear in court.

SERVING VICTIMS

Beginning in March 2020, in response to ever changing barriers imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the victim assistance unit embarked on a multi-phased process to modify the methods used to obtain protection from abuse/stalking orders. This was consistent with District Attorney Steve Howe's motto of being "flexible and nimble" to insure we serve the people of Johnson County.

In effort to solve the issue of transitioning from in-person service to remote/electronic filing, the VAU began hosting virtual meetings with our in-house partners - Courthouse Security, the Civil Clerk's Office, the Help Center and the JCISO Civil Division. After first devising what was termed a "Minimal Contact Process" for protective order filings, Victim Assistance Advocates and Courthouse personnel teamed-up to develop forms which could be emailed from the VAU or the Help Center to applicants and completed electronically. With the Courthouse closed to the public, this became the only viable option for those seeking protective orders until options for collaboration eventually expanded. Our outstanding community partners - Kansas Legal Services, Safehome and MOCSA - now meet monthly to evaluate the current processes, address barriers and work to further protect those in need in Johnson County.

These efforts have resulted in our Victim Assistance Unit and the Help Center emailing protective orders. The Civil Clerk's Office has created a specific Protection Order email address for citizens, and Kansas Legal Services created a Protection Order Hotline. Safehome and MOCSA have staff attorneys and legal assistance staff to aid applicants.

In 2021 Victim Assistance staff and volunteers spoke to 1,143 victims about filing civil protection orders and provided over 2,991 referrals to community resources available.

All of these efforts have given citizens greater opportunities to quickly access the court system and obtain the necessary orders to protect themselves and their loved ones. We appreciate all the assistance we received from both government and non for profit agencies who made this possible.



MOCK TRIAL WINNERS

Two of our Legal Interns, Alissa Biermaier and Trey Allison, along with their UMKC law school classmate, Margaret Stansell, competed in a mock trial tournament in November 2021 and won! The final round of their mock trial was against some of the top defense attorneys in Missouri and their special round was judged by Chief Justice Draper from the Missouri Supreme Court.

NATIONAL RECOGNITION

The Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention out of San Diego did a Facebook live highlighting tremendous work by two of our former Assistant District Attorney's, Leena Bellmann and Brenna Lynch, on successfully prosecuting a challenging strangulation case with an uncooperative victim. Assistant District Attorney, Megan Ahsens, was also recognized for her efforts in making strangulation a felony crime in Kansas as well as training law enforcement on the matter. A recording of the Facebook live video can be watched by going to this link: <https://fb.watch/aWqc7PLXw7/>.

JAG CORP

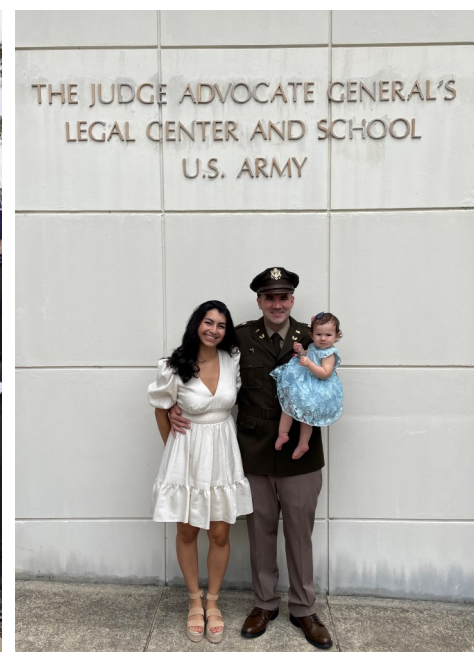
The Johnson County District Attorney's Office has two Assistant District Attorney's, Jeff Shull & Tim Randolph, who serve as Reserve officers with the U.S. Army National Guard with assignments to the Judge Advocate Generals (JAG) Corps.

Jeff was a Legal Intern with our office from May 2019—May 2020. In November of 2020 Jeff rejoined our office as an Assistant District Attorney.

In September of 2015, Tim was a new hire with our office as a Trial Assistant. Tim was in that role with our office until June of 2020 when he resigned to focus on law school. Tim rejoined our office in May of 2021 as a Legal Intern. Tim graduated from UMKC School of Law in December of 2021 and has now rejoined our office as an Assistant District Attorney!



ADA Tim Randolph



ADA Jeff Shull



SWEARING IN FOR FOURTH TERM

On January 11th, 2021, Chief Judge Kelly Ryan administered the oath of office to Johnson County District Attorney Steve Howe. Mr. Howe is now in his fourth term as District Attorney for the Tenth Judicial District. Later that day, all 38 of our Assistant District Attorneys were also sworn in for this term.

21ST CENTURY PUBLIC SAFETY ACADEMY

In May of 2021, Senior Law Enforcement Students that are a part of the 21st Century Public Safety Academy through Olathe West High School presented their homicide case to District Attorney, Steve Howe.



CARE & TREATMENT FILINGS INCREASE

The Johnson County District Attorney's Office files civil mental commitment cases under K.S.A. 59-2945. Under this statute, all county and district attorneys have the responsibility to file cases, when a person is in a mental health crisis. The purpose of this statute allows our office to file petitions on behalf of a qualified mental health professional when a resident is thought to be a danger to themselves and/or others and lacks capacity to make their own mental health treatment decisions. Johnson County experienced an increase in filings of over 40% from 2020 to 2021, resulting in the largest number of cases our office has ever filed. The District Attorney's Office has a dedicated Care and Treatment team responsible for the timely filings of petitions and handles court hearings for those cases.

ONLINE TRAFFIC DIVERSION

The District Attorney's Office began its online traffic diversion program on July 6, 2020. The creation of our online traffic diversion program was a collaborative effort with the JIMS department. The pandemic pushed this project to the forefront, as the courthouse was not accessible to the public for many months. The online diversion program allows defendants charged with certain traffic infractions issued by the Johnson County Sheriff's Department, Kansas Highway Patrol and Johnson County Park Police, to complete the diversion process, without the need to come to the courthouse. A typical traffic diversion consists of a 6-month term with no new violations, resulting in the case being dismissed after the end of that term. On September 10, 2021 our 1,000th traffic case was diverted through our online traffic diversion program.

JOHNSON COUNTY, KS DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

We are grateful to our many community partners, who include, the programmers and network managers of the Justice Information Management System (JIMS), Safehome, MOCSA, Sunflower House, CASA, TLC, and many more.

To learn more, visit our website at <http://da.jocogov.org>.

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VOLUNTEERS

The criminal justice system is overwhelming to most people who become involved as victims or witnesses. Volunteers for the District Attorney's Office serve as victim advocates, educating the public about the criminal justice process, thereby enhancing the efficiency of prosecuting the case. Volunteers help the unit to serve more victims in a timely manner and allow for more individualized time to be given to victims.

DA volunteers provide notification and information to victims concerning the victim's case and the criminal justice system. They refer victims to available services/resources to help reduce physical, social and psychological problems resulting from victimization.

Additional services include:

Assisting victims with protective orders.

Escorting victims and witnesses to court and signing them up for witness fees.

Making telephone contact with victims to answer questions and explain information they have received.

Attending first appearances to gather information for the unit.

Answering phones and performing other office tasks such as filing and entering information into the computer.

During 2021 as we continued to provide services both in-person and remotely to the public, volunteers provided 1,641 hours to help support those efforts. Volunteers provide direct victim services as a member of the Victim Assistance Unit and also on occasion support other divisions of the District Attorney's Office. Although COVID impacted the total number of volunteers we could bring into our office, we were able to continue partnerships with area schools and maintain relationships with existing volunteers. Our existing volunteers have a combined total of 28 years of experience within the District Attorney's Office, which helps us maintain the high level of services we provide.

Anyone who wishes to volunteer may contact the Johnson County District Attorney Office's Volunteer Coordinator @ 913-715-3029, for further information.

THANK YOU

None of the work accomplished in the District Attorney's Office is done without the support, collaboration, and assistance of our many community partners. With that in mind, we would like to offer this special note of thanks to the following:

- Ed Eilert, Board of County Commissioners Chairman
- Becky Fast, 1st District County Commissioner
- Jeff Meyers, 2nd District County Commissioner
- Charlotte O'Hara, 3rd District County Commissioner
- Janee' Hanzlick, 4th District County Commissioner
- Michael Ashcraft, 5th District County Commissioner
- Shirley Allenbrand, 6th District County Commissioner
- Calvin Hayden, Johnson County Sheriff
- Penny Postoak Ferguson, County Manager
- Johnson County Chiefs of Police

District Attorney's Office Units and Divisions:

Main Line	913-715-3000
Victim Assistance	913-715-3004
Diversion	913-715-3114
Traffic	913-715-3011
Juvenile	913-715-3149
Consumer Fraud Hotline	913-715-3003
Juvenile Diversion	913-715-7476