

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE
STATE OF WASHINGTON
FOR KING COUNTY**

ANNUAL REPORT 1976



JUVENILE COURT

Court Reporting. The transition to court recording machine from shorthand reporting in juvenile matters was completed in 1976. New equipment was purchased and was put in use in September. Because of the extreme sophistication of the equipment, some maintenance problems occurred. By the end of the year the problems were identified and solutions were imminent. Two types of equipment were tested and it was the consensus that the 4-channel model using cassettes at reduced recording speed were the most reliable and cost effective.

Two court reporters formerly assigned full-time to Juvenile Court have been transferred to the courthouse to provide relief from the extremely heavy appellate load being incurred as a result of overall increase in trial activity.

Guardian ad litem Program. A revised guardian ad litem program for use in Juvenile Court has been approved for implementation January 1, 1977 by the Juvenile Court Judges' Committee. The new program in effect will replace the hiring of attorney guardian ad litem, with a voluntary guardian ad litem concept supported by legal advisors as required. The purpose is to inject a more social aspect into the guardian ad litem recommendations made to the court and to consider more completely the ethnic background of the individuals involved. A consultant/director has been named for the program, and the new concept if successful is expected to result in better service to the court, as well as reduction in overall costs in legal services.

Juvenile Calendaring. Toward the end of the year, planning was implemented to reduce the number of courtrooms in operation at 12th and Alder from three to two. This would involve transferring all dependency and deprivation cases heard in the youth service courtrooms to the Presiding Department calendar in the courthouse and then assignment to a courtroom downtown. Analysis of that program will continue. The intent of the transition is to provide better utilization of judicial manpower.

FAMILY COURT AND ADOPTION SERVICE
(SPECIAL CALENDARS DEPARTMENT)

Family Court services in the custody/visitation area continued to grow in quantity. Total intake for these services was 724 cases, up from the 1976 total of 658. Conciliation intake declined slightly from the 1975 total of 272 to 221. It is difficult to assess the overall impact that these declines and increases will have on the Family Court staff. However, since it takes more time to do a custody visitation investigation than conciliation counseling, if this trend continues, more staffing hours will be needed.

Adoption procedures, particularly in the area of post-adoption supervision and counseling, were modified in October 1975. This revision by the judges essentially reduced the requirement for an adoption counselor. With the foregoing action, coupled with a slight drop in stepparent adoptions, the Family Court's budget was reduced by one man year for the year 1976. During 1976, the Adoption Service has been able to maintain their workload with the reduced staff person. There was a need to redistribute staff responsibilities and these adjustments have not diminished the usual basic staff functions. Additionally, because of reduced staff, the department put into operation the Xerox 800 electronic typing system. Because of its versatility, additional clerical help was not needed during the year in spite of the significant rise in the caseload.

Interviews and recommendations were made to the court on 149 marriage waiver referrals for those 17 years old or under requesting marriage licenses.

The Association of Family Conciliation Courts, which held its national meeting in Seattle in 1975, is the only known national organization dealing directly with the problems of marital crisis on an interdisciplinary level. King County Superior Court has Judge Nancy Ann Holman and Family Court Administrator Alice Y. Thomas serving on the Executive Committee of that organization.

The Family Court staff remained stable throughout the year with one resignation and an immediate replacement.