

ST. LOUIS COUNTY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE



**CONTINUING OUR MISSION TO
BRING FAIRNESS AND JUSTICE TO YOU**

Duluth Courthouse
100 N. 5th Ave. W., #501
Duluth, MN 55802
(218) 726-2323

Virginia Courthouse
300 S. 5th Ave., #222
Virginia, MN 55792
(218) 749-7101

Hibbing Courthouse
1810 12th Ave. E., #107
Hibbing, MN 55746
(218) 262-0158

Govt. Services Center
320 W. 2nd Street, #403
Duluth, MN 55802
(218) 726-2034

TABLE OF CONTENTS

County Attorney Summit	2
Letter From Your County Attorney	3
Civil Division	4
PHHS Division	5
Criminal Division	6
Victim / Witness Division	7
Administration and Initiatives	8
Crimes By The Numbers	9-11
Everything Is Waiting For You by David Whyte	12

Northeast Minnesota, Northwest Wisconsin Prosecutors Summit on Domestic Violence

The St. Louis County Attorney's office made history in 2012 by initiating its first Northeast Minnesota / Northwest Wisconsin County Attorneys Summit. It gave an opportunity for the region's county attorneys to share information across county—and even state—lines while addressing complex issues and difficult cases.



(David Brown, Chief Deputy, Hennepin County Attorney's Office presents at the Domestic Violence Summit.)

Last October, St. Louis County Attorney Mark Rubin and his prosecuting attorneys hosted the NE MN / NW WI prosecutors' summit on domestic violence. Rubin stated the reason behind this significant undertaking: "While we have made great strides in our prosecution of these cases, the reality is that people still continue to beat, rape, strangle, and stalk those they purportedly love."

The sad statistics in St. Louis County alone are alarming: In the first nine months of 2013, there were 395 domestic violence crimes, including 78 assaults by strangulation; 19 domestic assaults with a weapon, and six domestic violence cases that included sexual assaults.

Rubin and the prosecuting attorneys who make up the St. Louis County Domestic Violence Unit decided to recommit with an even more powerful response to prosecuting these crimes by meeting with prosecutors from other cities and counties throughout the Sixth Judicial District as well as from northwest Wisconsin. "We are committed to a proactive response in prosecuting these matters," Rubin said. "We want to raise the awareness: domestic violence is not acceptable."

In 2013, the number of prosecutor participants tripled from 2012 due to the Summit's focus on prosecution of domestic violence cases.

Jessica Fralich, one of four attorneys in the county's Domestic Violence Unit states several reasons why this Summit is so important. "Prosecution of domestic violence crimes poses unique challenges to us as prosecutors. We want to have an open exchange of ideas to increase the successful prosecution of these cases. As prosecutors, we want to focus on the accountability of the offenders because domestic violence and violence against women is such an egregious offense with wide sweeping effects all across our Northland communities."

"Domestic violence perpetrates harm on our communities; it attacks the core of the family," says Assistant St. Louis County Attorney Rebekka Stumme, who was also one of the experts presenting at the Summit. "It creates a ripple effect because of the damage done to the victims, their family members, their friends and their employers."



Letter from St. Louis County Attorney Mark S. Rubin

“Dedicated here to the unfinished work”

When I am asked, “What does the county attorney do?” I usually reply that we prosecute crimes, protect vulnerable adults and children in danger of victimization, and provide expert legal counsel to the County Board and departments in support of the work of guiding county business.

At the heart of our day-to-day duties is the dedication to the unfinished work to bring fairness and justice to our community.

In 2013, we commemorated the anniversaries of two remarkable speeches about America. It has been more than 50 years since Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. shared his I Have a Dream speech, and 150 years since Abraham Lincoln delivered his Gettysburg Address.

Both of these speeches inspired people to greater action. The words continue to stir a passion within our souls, but as we all know, actions speak louder than words. After Lincoln and after King, good people who heard the call made a decision to dedicate themselves to the work . . . to do what needed to be done.

This decision is made every day by the attorneys and staff doing the work of the county attorney’s office. Following Lincoln’s directive, we steadfastly remain “dedicated here to the unfinished work” of ensuring safety, victims’ rights, protecting children, as well as the right of the accused to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. Heeding Dr. King’s call, we strive for fairness, using the “high plane of dignity and discipline” to achieve justice within the legal system. We serve the dream of equality by enabling the most vulnerable among us to secure their right to special care, protection, and supportive services.

This past year, the work has included our shared leadership in combating juvenile sex trafficking. We’ve collaborated with law enforcement in addressing the scourge of domestic violence. We built a first-class diversion program which more effectively holds juvenile offenders accountable for their conduct. We also drafted and reviewed a record number of contracts for our departments.

The murder of Trina Langenbrunner had been unsolved for nearly 13 years. This case was an incredible challenge, but we continued to work with law enforcement in a prosecution effort in which no one gave up. As a result, the person responsible for Trina’s death was charged, convicted, and will be in prison for almost 40 years.

There will always be unfinished work to do, but we dedicate ourselves on your behalf -- the citizens of St. Louis County -- to continue to work at making our community a safer and more just place to live.

Mark Rubin
St. Louis County Attorney

(ON FRONT COVER)

The annual report cover art was photographed in the Veterans’ Memorial Hall at the Depot in Duluth and is emblematic of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR). That fraternal organization was composed of veterans of the Union Army, U.S. Navy, Marines and Revenue Cutter Service who served in the American Civil War. The GAR linked vets in becoming among the first organized advocacy groups in American politics, supporting voting rights for black veterans and lobbying the U.S. Congress to establish veterans’ pensions.

Board of County Commissioners

- 1st District:** Frank Jewell
- 2nd District:** Patrick Boyle
- 3rd District:** Chris Dahlberg
- 4th District:** Mike Forsman
- 5th District:** Pete Stauber
- 6th District:** Keith Nelson
- 7th District:** Steve Raukar



Kim Maki

Civil Division Head

Duluth Office:

Leslie Beiers

Nick Campanario

Jim Nephew

Thomas Stanley

Timothy Tysdal

Civil Division

Kim Maki leads the Civil Division of the County Attorney's Office. The division is responsible for advising County Administration and all county departments regarding county business and governance issues. Division attorneys are assigned to the various county departments and develop expertise with regard to various areas of law. The division also provides legal services to Arrowhead Regional Corrections (ARC).

During the past year, the work of the division has been substantial and varied. In addition to daily requests for legal research and advice and contract review, the division attorneys have been involved in many of the county's major accomplishments, including:

- An agreement with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Bois Forte Band to allow deputy sheriffs to obtain special law enforcement commissions to enforce Federal and Tribal law on the reservation
- A system for issuance and dissemination for court security alerts
- Reviewing and revising the proposed Ordinance 61 relating to septic systems
- Eminent domain actions necessary for the reconstruction of Haines Road
- Reviewing and approving of contracts for repair work necessitated by the June 2012 flood
- Planning a special election to fill a vacant county commissioner position
- Negotiating a "construction manager at risk" contract for the \$19 million renovation of the Government Services Center
- Negotiating a management contract for Camp Esquagama
- Negotiating for a sale of the Hibbing Racetrack to the City of Hibbing

Additionally, the division successfully represented the county in a number of court cases, including tax court litigation regarding lands owned by Blandin Paper Company, personal injury claims, employment claims and claims brought by persons alleging illegal searches of their drivers license information.

Finally, the division provided ARC with legal services relating to the \$6 million renovation of the Northeast Regional Corrections Center.

With a focus on customer service, the division strives to provide timely and thoughtful advice and work product to county commissioners, county staff and the public.



Patricia Shaffer

PHHS Division Head

Duluth Office:

Jennifer Barry
Joseph Fischer
Heather Korpela
Clarissa McDonald
Charles Schumacher
Angie Shambour
Benjamin Stromberg
Joanne Vavrosky

Hibbing Office:

Gayle Goff
Stacey Sundquist

Virginia Office:

Sharon Chadwick
Rena Darland

Investigators:

Katherine Finc
William Klein
Shawn Laine

Public Health & Human Services Division

The Public Health and Human Services Division, led by Patricia Shaffer, is comprised of 12 attorneys and 3 investigators. The division is responsible for prosecuting juvenile delinquency cases; handling legal actions related to child protection, civil commitment, guardianship, paternity and child support matters; investigating and prosecuting public assistance fraud; and, providing legal representation and advice to the county's Public Health and Human Services Department.

The incidents of child abuse and neglect requiring legal involvement increased 12 percent in 2013. Child protection petitions filed in 2011, 2012 and 2013 were 246, 285, and 319 respectively. Correspondingly, there was an increase in legal actions to secure a permanency plan for children who could not be returned home.

In 2013, the division filed 103 permanency petitions, up from 93 in 2012. Drugs and alcohol play a significant factor in many of the petitions filed by the division. For instance, in August, drug or alcohol use was a factor in 62 percent of the petitions filed. Children being left unsupervised, their needs unmet, or being found in dangerous circumstances -- such as exposure to drug activity or violence in the home -- are other concerns often found in these same reports.

Juvenile crime continues on a downward trend. The division received 1,769 referrals in 2013, down from 1,815 in 2012 and 1,878 in 2011. Truancy, often viewed as a gateway to future crime, was also down. The division participates in a School Attendance Review Board which is a collaborative effort to address truancy in the schools before going to court.

The division also operates a juvenile diversion program, known as the Youth Accountability Program. Diversion programs hold juveniles accountable for their crimes and promote rehabilitation, while meeting the needs of victims and public safety. In 2013, 358 children participated in our diversion program. Juvenile crimes range from status offenses based on age up to serious felony cases. The division successfully certified to be tried as an adult a 17-year-old juvenile accused of, and subsequently convicted of, second-degree murder for bludgeoning a man to death.

Representation on civil commitment matters was up 10 percent in 2013, with 150 cases opened. This year the division successfully sought the indeterminate commitment of a sex offender with a history of sexually assaulting women. He had been continuing his assaultive behavior despite extensive treatment and incarceration.

The division assists the county's Public Health and Human Services Department's child support unit in establishing paternity. In 2013, 593 paternity actions were initiated. The county's child support unit boasts a record of many successful and continuous years of exceeding the federal benchmarks for paternity establishment. Establishing paternity is the first step in the process to getting support in place for children. The division also provided representation to the child support unit on 466 other establishment and enforcement matters.

Looking to the future, the division will work with the county PHHS agency to promote greater awareness and prevention of abuse and exploitation of vulnerable adults.



Gary Bjorklund
Criminal Division Head

Duluth Office:

- Jessica Fralich
- Jon Holets
- Chris Pinkert
- Nate Stumme
- Rebekka Stumme
- Kristen Swanson
- Vicky Wanta

Hibbing Office:

- Brian Simonson
- Karl Sundquist
- Jeff Vlatkovich

Virginia Office:

- Michelle Anderson
- Gordon Coldagelli
- Leah Stauber

Criminal Division

Gary Bjorklund leads the 13 criminal prosecutors who work in Duluth, Virginia and Hibbing. This highly effective team is responsible for charging and prosecuting all levels of adult criminal offenses within St. Louis County including felonies, gross misdemeanors, misdemeanors, and county ordinance violations. In 2013, 3,422 cases were referred from law enforcement to the county attorney’s office. This included 2,201 felony cases which represented a 10 percent increase over the previous year.

Additionally, the prosecutors are involved in DWI, Drug and Mental Health problem-solving specialty courts. The Criminal Division attorneys are also responsible for setting up and conducting law enforcement training to support police in the latest changes in laws and regulations. These training sessions are designed to improve investigative procedures, search and seizure methods, and other aspects of criminal investigation.

One of the high points of the year for the division was helping to obtain justice for the family of Trina Langenbrunner, a 33-year-old mother of three, who was slain nearly 13 years earlier.

In a July plea hearing, Joseph Couture admitted that he beat and stabbed the victim to death on Sept. 3, 2000. He pleaded guilty to intentional second-degree murder, first-degree aiding and abetting aggravated witness tampering for conspiring with his girlfriend, Sandra Couture, to intimidate witnesses against him, and aiding and abetting first-degree arson.

Joseph Couture received a 39½-year prison sentence. Sandra Couture was sentenced to 9½ years in prison.

Other high profile and difficult cases that the division prosecuted in the past year included:

- Wendell Greene was convicted of first-degree criminal sexual conduct. He was sentenced to 18 years in prison and a lifetime conditional release and lifetime predatory offender registration requirements were imposed. Greene was a youth basketball coach who sexually assaulted two players.
- Jimmy Lee Morris was convicted of first-degree criminal sexual conduct. He was sentenced to nearly 14½ years in prison. The case involved a 40-year old woman who was sexually assaulted by a group of unknown males.
- Joshua Lee Littlewolf was convicted of second-degree murder and received a 40-year prison sentence. Littlewolf represented himself at the trial which created a unique set of obstacles for court security, the prosecution, and the presiding judge.
- Thomas Gentry was convicted of second-degree possession of cocaine. Gentry was sentenced to 12½ years in prison as a career offender. He had five previous felony drug convictions.
- Cole Kjellberg was convicted of third-degree assault. Kjellberg was convicted of assaulting his six-week-old child, causing a skull fracture and bleeding inside the brain. Kjellberg had three prior domestic violence convictions including one which involved another assault upon a child.


Patty Wheeler

Victim/Witness Director

Duluth Office:

Anne Fisk

Lori Ulvi

Hibbing Office:

Elaine Lee

Virginia Office:

Jaime Varichak

Victim/Witness Division

Minnesota law provides many rights for the victims of crime and the Victim/Witness division is dedicated to advising victims of those rights and supporting them as justice is sought.

The goal of victim services is to help ease the physical, emotional, and financial hardships caused by criminal victimization and to reduce the confusion and inconvenience that may be caused by involvement in the criminal justice system by providing comprehensive services to victims and witnesses of crime.

The office makes initial contact with a victim by letter informing them of the charges filed against the offender. Included in that letter is a brochure explaining their rights as a victim and a request for them to call the office so that advocates can get input from them and address any questions or concerns they may have. Staff tries to make contact with every victim by telephone.

During 2013, staff handled thousands of phone calls, texts, and emails from victims and witnesses, ensuring that the Minnesota Crime Victims Rights laws are upheld. Often, victims are feeling afraid or confused, and witnesses might be frustrated or even angry with a system they do not understand. However, information about court advocacy, notification of hearing dates, trial preparation and a myriad of other issues are competently and compassionately dealt with by the advocates.

Each of the St. Louis County Attorney's offices in Duluth, Hibbing and Virginia has a Victim/Witness staff member. Patty Wheeler is the division director.

The division is responsible for getting victims and witnesses to court for trials where the staff works behind the scenes. The staff helps find witnesses, stays in contact with them and informs them when the trying of a case can result in scheduling changes, which can occur multiple times during a trial.

The division also coordinates the Youth Accountability Program, which provides an alternative to delinquency court or prosecution. The goal of the program is to develop reasonable alternatives to the juvenile justice system which reduce costs and caseload burdens on the courts.

Administration and Initiatives

Wade Backstrom

Office Administrator

Mark Stodghill

Projects and Initiatives
Coordinator

Duluth Courthouse Office:

Yvonne Kalin, Supervisor
Betty Christenson
Carla Dilla
Shirley Garden
Teresa Harries
Rachel Lambert
Diane Lundberg
Jody Messner
Sue Peterson
Angel Ricker
Teresa White
Cynthia Zuk

Duluth Government Services Office:

Mary Fruehauf, Supervisor
Tianna Burnett
Jackie Calvert
Diane Eck
Laura Tromblay

Hibbing Office:

Veronica Ratliff, Supervisor
Alaina Denny
Char Meinzer
Rachael Turk

Virginia Office:

Veronica Ratliff, Supervisor
Patti Everson
Tracy McDonald
Candy Nelson
Tammy Sundahl



Administration

Office Administrator Wade Backstrom oversees the highly skilled 26-member support staff and is responsible for human resource matters, technology management, and purchasing as steward of the county attorney’s \$7 million annual budget.

Three supervisors manage clerical teams in four locations. They are responsible for the maintenance of our case management system and play a leading role in the North East Minnesota Enforcement Safety Information System

(NEMESIS), which strengthens public safety in St. Louis, Carlton, Cook, Lake, and Koochiching counties.

Initiatives

The county attorney’s office is exploring several initiatives this year, including studying the feasibility or the need of creating a specialty court for military veterans, looking at what can be done to help keep the elderly from being abused and exploited, and continuing to raise public awareness of sex trafficking in the Northland.

A Veterans Court, like Drug Courts, would be based on a problem-solving model rather than the traditional punitive court model. The goal of problem-solving courts is to address the underlying chemical and mental health issues faced by offenders.

The county attorney’s office continues to meet with district judges, the public defender’s office and veterans’ advocates to determine whether there is a need for a Veteran’s Court in St. Louis County and will be prepared to do its part if one is created.

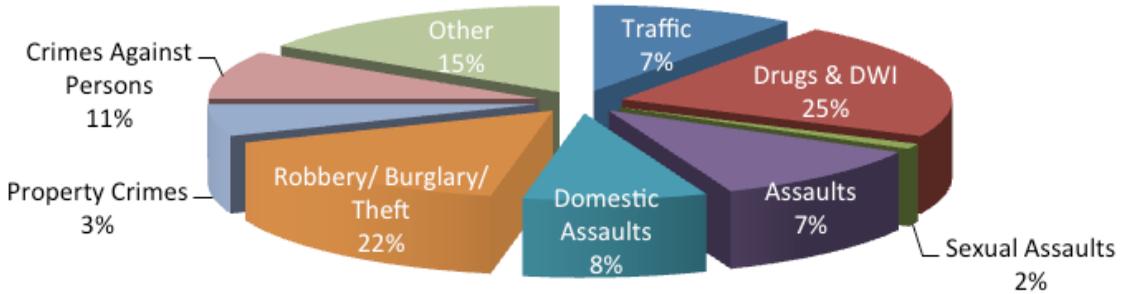
Partnering with Public Health & Human Services, the financial exploitation and abuse/neglect of senior citizens will also be scrutinized this year. Staff plans to meet with personnel at nursing homes, assisted living facilities and other senior centers in the county to share ideas on how to protect seniors.

The county attorney continues to address the problem of sex trafficking in the region. Office staff plans to meet with local hotel management and share a video that trains their personnel to be on the lookout for suspicious behavior that might involve prostitution and/or trafficking. The hotels will also be encouraged to not allow x-rated movies as part of their services.

The Racial Justice Improvement Project -- spearheaded by the county attorney’s office partnering with the district court, public defender’s office, Arrowhead Regional Corrections and community leaders -- continues to gather data to study any racial disparities in pretrial detention and release. The task force’s goal is to identify and eliminate any racial bias in pretrial detention decisions.

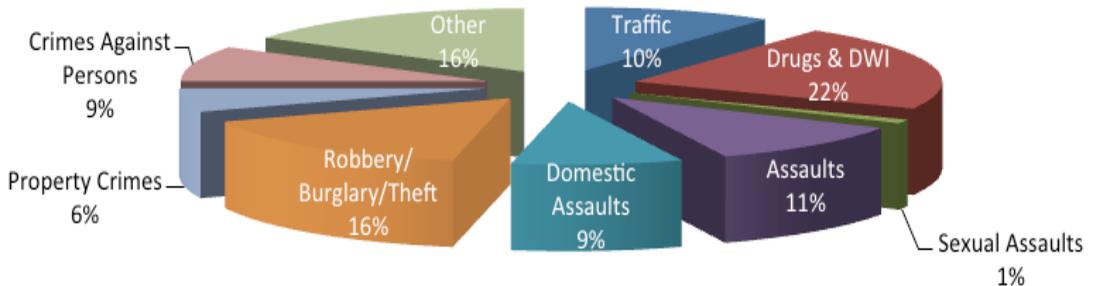
Percent of Adult Referrals by Crime Type

**Adult Referrals By Crime Type
2013**



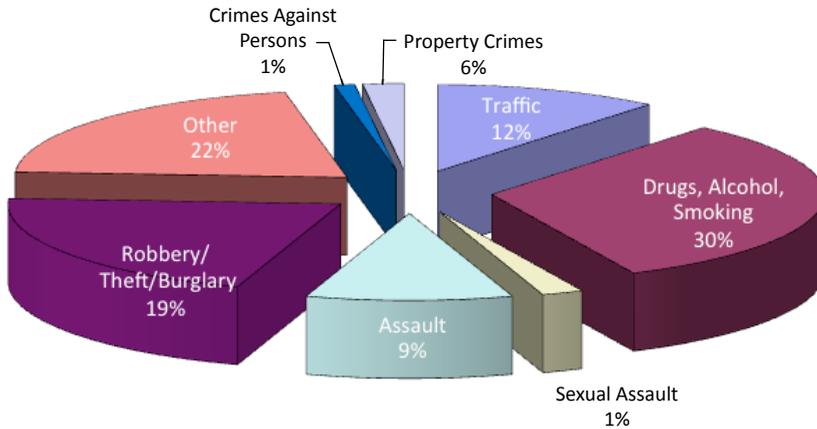
In 2013, 3,422 adult criminal referrals were made to our office; 7.5 percent more than in 2012. Adult felony referrals increased 10 percent.

**Adult Referrals By Crime Type
2012**



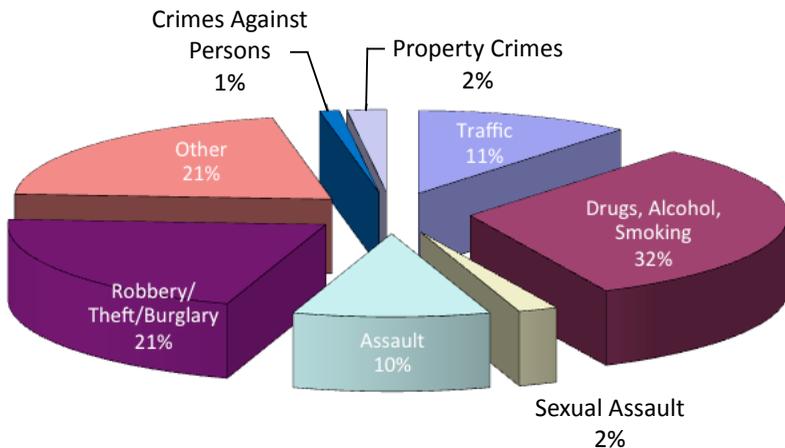
Percent of Juvenile Referrals by Crime Type

**Juvenile Referrals By Crime Type
2013**



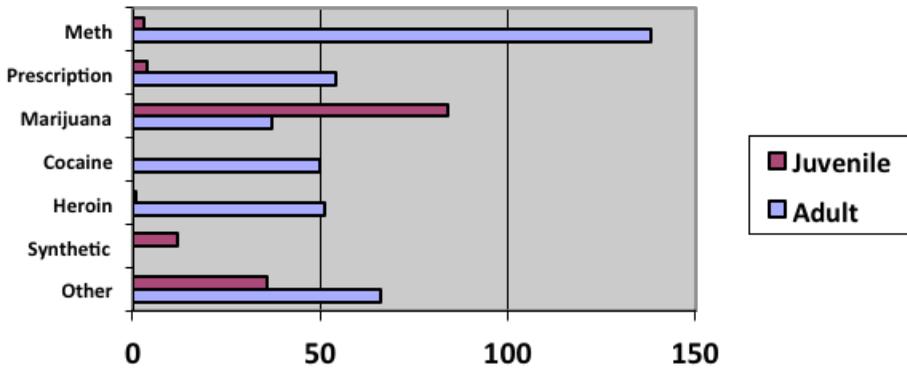
In 2013, 1,769 juvenile referrals were made to our office; 2.5 percent fewer than 2012.

**Juvenile Referrals By Crime Type
2012**



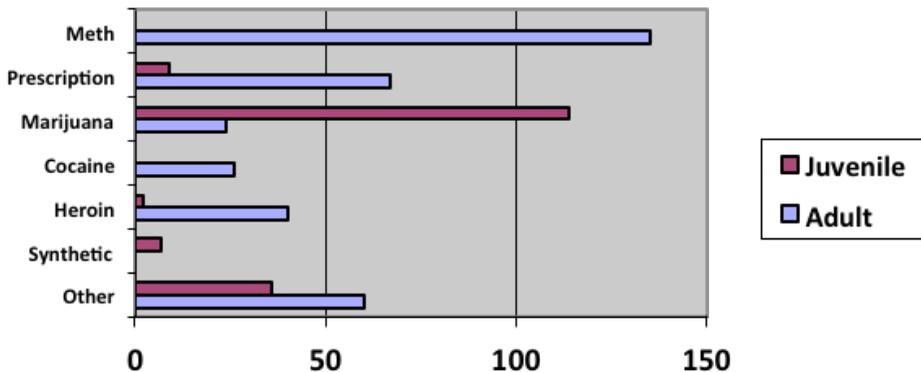
Drug Referrals By Drug Type

**Drug Referrals by Drug Type
2013**



In 2013, 508 adult referrals involved drugs; 26 percent more than 2012.
 In 2013, 142 juvenile referrals involved drugs; 17 percent fewer than 2012.

**Drug Referrals by Drug Type
2012**



Our last two Reports have featured the poetry of Naomi Shihab Nye. This year, I was drawn to this poem. Some might say by accident... The words of David Whyte speak from his heart directly to the heart of so many of our fellow citizens that we serve from young to old.

After he granted me permission to use the poem, I learned that David will be in Minnesota to deliver the keynote address for this fall's PHHS Annual Conference! Coincidence? Where I come from, we call that circumstantial evidence...

Mark S. Rubin - St. Louis County Attorney

Everything is Waiting for You

Your great mistake is to act the drama
as if you were alone. As if life
were a progressive and cunning crime
with no witness to the tiny hidden
transgressions. To feel abandoned is to deny
the intimacy of your surroundings. Surely,
even you, at times, have felt the grand array;
the swelling presence, and the chorus, crowding
out your solo voice You must note
the way the soap dish enables you,
or the window latch grants you freedom.
Alertness is the hidden discipline of familiarity.
The stairs are your mentor of things
to come, the doors have always been there
to frighten you and invite you,
and the tiny speaker in the phone
is your dream-ladder to divinity.

Put down the weight of your aloneness and ease into
the conversation. The kettle is singing
even as it pours you a drink, the cooking pots
have left their arrogant aloofness and
seen the good in you at last. All the birds
and creatures of the world are unutterably
themselves. Everything is waiting for you.

David Whyte
from Everything is Waiting for You
©2003 Many Rivers Press (used with permission)
www.davidwhyte.com

*This publication is made possible through the efforts of the St. Louis County Attorney's Office, in association with local law enforcement agencies. Funds utilized are converted property that aided in or was used in the commission of criminal offenses that occurred in St. Louis County. No taxpayer dollars have been expended in the printing of this publication.