



Fall 2024 Report



Elliot Kolkovich

Summit County Prosecutor

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A MESSAGE FROM PROSECUTOR KOLKOVICH

Commitment to Public Engagement

I am proud to provide this report regarding the dedicated public service of the Summit County Prosecutor's Office for the past six months. Since taking office on February 21, 2024, I have been honored to lead this Office and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve the community that I chose as my home more than 13 years ago.

As your County Prosecutor, I am committed to being transparent with the public, to engaging deeply with the community, and to educating the citizens of Summit County about the Office's progress in meeting our tremendous responsibilities. In line with that commitment, we are joining the ranks of other major metropolitan areas and releasing our inaugural fall report. In the report that follows, we outline the Office's notable cases, statistical trends we've seen, and the effort we've exerted to make Summit County a safer place for everyone from Reminderville to Clinton, Sagamore Hills to Green, and everywhere in between.

Historic Reorganization

During my first six months in Office, I have sought to build on the work of my predecessors, particularly the trailblazer that immediately preceded me, Sherri Bevan Walsh, and to renew our dedication to innovative strategies. Within this time of new beginnings, I am particularly proud of the reorganization of the Adult Felony Unit of the Criminal Division, which went into effect on April 15, 2024. The Criminal Division's reorganization was the first significant reform of the division's work in decades, and it has already produced major dividends for our enforcement priorities as well as our commitment to more efficient case dispositions. As part of the reorganization, our Office also now has a grant-funded Specialty Dockets prosecutor who collaborates closely with the Court of Common Pleas, defense attorneys, and the Probation Department to rehabilitate deserving offenders into productive citizens.

"Our Office will remain focused on ensuring that we deliver effective and efficient results for victims of crime and the public."

—Prosecutor Kolkovich

Connect with Us

It has been the highest privilege of my professional life to serve you in the past six months. If you have any suggestions on how we can improve our service or to preserve public safety, please contact our office.



Elliot Kolkovich
Summit County Prosecutor
October 15, 2024

THE CRIMINAL DIVISION

The Criminal Division is relentless in its mission of keeping our communities safe by effectively prosecuting felony cases, pursuing justice in juvenile delinquency matters, and zealously representing Summit County Children Services in child protection proceedings. Assistant Prosecutors in the Criminal Division appear on behalf of Summit County in the General Division of the Court of Common Pleas, Juvenile Court, the Ninth District Court of Appeals, and the Ohio Supreme Court. During the first six months of Prosecutor Kolkovich's tenure, the Criminal Division has disposed of 3,146 adult felony matters, handled 1,715 juvenile delinquency charges, and initiated 471 child protection cases.¹

■	ADULT FELONY CASES	3,146
■	DELINQUENCY CHARGES	1,715
■	CHILD PROTECTION CASES	471



Prosecutor Kolkovich with several of the Office's victim advocates and our facility dog, Adam.



Prosecutor Kolkovich addresses seniors in Macedonia about scam prevention.

¹ The statistics included in this section of the Report were primarily tracked and compiled with the Matrix case management system that the Summit County Prosecutor's Office uses. The statistics are subject to continuous quality review and are subject to modification.

Adult Felony Unit

Teams Reorganization

“Our new ‘teams’ approach provides stability for crime victims by aligning the vast skills and experience of the Adult Felony unit on a more permanent basis. We are already seeing significant results in terms of efficiency and effectiveness from the new format.”

–Prosecutor Kolkovich

Based on national best practices, Prosecutor Kolkovich directed the reorganization of the Adult Felony Unit to prioritize the prosecution of violent offenses, streamline operations, and provide additional stability to victims of crime. Under the previous framework, Assistant Prosecutors were assigned to a particular courtroom for a year and then rotated to a different courtroom every year. Additionally, supervisors had the dual responsibility of supervising other Assistant Prosecutors and handling the highest-level cases in the Office. Meanwhile, victim advocates and support staff reported to different supervisors than the Assistant Prosecutors.

Under Prosecutor Kolkovich’s new “teams” framework, the Adult Felony Unit now has five “Major Trial Prosecutors” who are dedicated exclusively to prosecuting high-level offenses such as murder and rape as well as violent offenses involving the worst repeat offenders. And, Major Trial Prosecutors, other assistant prosecutors, victim advocates, and support staff will all work collaboratively at the direction of one Supervising Attorney.

<u>Metric</u>	<u>Pre-Reorganization</u>	<u>Post-Reorganization</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Convictions	1,198	1,411	↑ 18%
F1 & F2 Convictions	118	163	↑ 38%
Average Case Length	382 days	341 days	↓ 11%
Cases Disposed within 180 Days	526	658	↑ 25%
	<u>Estimated Savings</u>	\$399,586	

*Pre-reorganization figures are from the time period from December 15, 2023 to April 14, 2024;

Post-reorganization figures are from April 15, 2024 to August 14, 2024

Since the reorganization, the Adult Felony Unit has obtained more high-level convictions and disposed of cases in a much timelier fashion. Because of those quicker

timeframes for case disposition, the Office estimates that the County has saved nearly \$400,000 in court costs and pretrial detention costs.²

In line with these improved outcomes in the Criminal Division, crime rates have dropped across Summit County over the past two years. In the City of Akron, there has been a 25% reduction in firearms-related offenses, a 33% reduction in shots fired calls, and a 25% reduction in murders through September 2024.³ Those decreases are in addition to historic crime reductions that occurred in 2023 when Akron’s homicides reached their “lowest rate in years.”⁴ The Office is thankful for the hard work of our law-enforcement partners throughout the County, and their work in bringing down crime should be commended.

Specialty Dockets Prosecutor

<u>Metric</u>	<u>Pre-Reorganization</u>	<u>Post-Reorganization</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Diversions Placements	162	239	↑ 48%
	Estimated Savings	\$79,218	

*Pre-reorganization figures are from the time period from December 15, 2023 to April 14, 2024;
Post-reorganization figures are from April 15, 2024 to August 14, 2024.

In collaboration with the Court of Common Pleas, the Summit County Prosecutor’s Office also created the position of Specialty Dockets Prosecutor in April 2024. The Specialty Dockets Prosecutor is focused on ensuring accountability for deserving offenders as they progress through the Court’s various rehabilitative programs, including Hope Court, Turning Point, Valor Court, and Re-Entry Court. Due to the Office’s commitment to rehabilitation and the creation of the Specialty Dockets Prosecutor, the number of offenders placed in diversionary programs has increased significantly since the reorganization of the Adult Felony Unit. By placing more deserving offenders in diversionary programs instead of incarceration, the Office estimates that the County has saved nearly \$80,000 over the past six months.⁵ The Court’s diversionary programs also have lower recidivism rates than the state average for felony offenders released from prison.

² According to the Ohio Legislative Service Commission, it costs approximately \$65 per day to house an inmate in pretrial detention. [https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/download?key=14634&format=pdf] According to the National Center for State Courts, a one-day delay in court proceedings costs approximately \$1. [https://www.ncsc.org/data/assets/pdf_file/0017/53234/ECCM-Cost-of-Delay-Calculator.pdf] Based on the average reduction in case disposition time since the reorganization and based on the fact that approximately 10% of cases involve pretrial detention, it is estimated that the Office’s new teams format saves \$399,586 across incarceration and court costs. [1,166 out-of-custody cases disposed at average of 41 days less saves a total of \$47,806 (\$41 per case) while 130 in-custody cases disposed at average of 41 days less saves a total of \$351,780 (\$2,706 per case)]. Note that for this calculation, the Office did not account for 115 cases disposed in August 2024 due to the Fugitive Safe Surrender program spearheaded by Summit County Sheriff Kandy Fatheree.

³ https://www.wkyc.com/article/news/local/akron/akron-mayor-shammas-malik-press-conference-violent-crime-statistics-independent-police-auditor-chief-brian-harding/95-b9928f3c-2572-46ff-97e3-b0c3b6d12dd5

⁴ https://www.beaconjournal.com/story/news/2024/02/18/murders-homicides-trend-down-in-akron-in-2023-gun-violence-still-high/72510164007/

⁵ According to the Center for Court Innovation, placing someone in diversion instead of incarceration saves \$1,028.80 per year. Based on having 77 more diversionary placements in the four months after the teams rollout, the total savings for the County is \$79,218. See Waller, et al., Testing the Cost Savings of Judicial Diversion (April 2013), available at https://www.innovatingjustice.org/publications/testing-cost-savings-judicial-diversion

Impact Prosecutions

Homicide Offenses

The Summit County Prosecutor's Office is committed to removing the most dangerous offenders from our communities to preserve public safety. To that end, the Office has obtained homicide convictions in 23 cases, including seven murder convictions, 12 manslaughter/conspiracy to commit murder convictions, and four vehicular homicide convictions since Prosecutor Kolkovich's appointment. As a result of those convictions, the Office has secured eight life prison terms and 16 other sentences totaling 133.5 to 167.5 years in prison. Some of the significant homicide cases prosecuted by our Office in the past six months are highlighted below.

LUTHER EASTER, 34, of Akron was found guilty at trial of various offenses, including Aggravated Murder, in connection with the shooting death of Dartanian Howard. The murder occurred on September 22, 2022 in the area of Flower Court and North Howard Street. Through the investigatory activities of Akron Police detectives, police found DNA at the scene from Laurelin Flanagan, and they were able to determine that Flanagan lured Dartanian to the scene where Easter and an unnamed accomplice killed him. Easter was sentenced to a life prison term with parole eligibility after 28 years. Flanagan was sentenced to a prison term of 13 to 18 years for her role in the homicide.

CAMERON JONES, 18, of Akron was found guilty at trial of various offenses, including Murder and Aggravated Robbery, in connection with the 2022 New Year's Eve murder of Damarcus Hartwell. Jones and three others were at Damarcus's house on New Year's Eve when they hatched a plot to rob Damarcus. As they carried out their plot, Jones shot Damarcus multiple times and stole items from his house. Jones was sentenced to a life prison term with parole eligibility after 21 years. His three co-conspirators in the robbery plot pleaded guilty and received prison terms totaling 34 to 48 years.

KAHLYL POWE, 26, of Akron was found guilty of Murder and firearm offenses arising from the shooting death of Kristopher Roukey on May 2, 2021. At approximately 5:00 p.m., Powe ordered a Lyft ride. Kristopher responded to Powe's order and picked him up near the intersection of East Market Street and East Buchtel Avenue. At some point during the ride, Powe got out of his vehicle and shot Kristopher multiple times, killing him. Powe was sentenced to a life prison term with parole eligibility after 19 years.

DANIEL SHANABERGER, 37, of Mogadore was found guilty of Aggravated Vehicular Homicide, Aggravated Vehicular Assault, and OVI. Shanaberger drove his vehicle at a high rate of speed into Ta'Shanna Junius's vehicle at a red light on Manchester Road in Akron. At the time, Shanaberger was under the influence of a drug cocktail that included heroin, cocaine, and fentanyl. The force of the collision forced Ta'Shanna's vehicle to run into another vehicle, which caused serious injuries to that vehicle's driver as well. Ta'Shanna was killed from her injuries. Shanaberger was sentenced to a prison term of 10 to 14 years.

Sex Offenses

The Summit County Prosecutor's Office is committed to removing sexual predators from the streets. As a result of that commitment, the Office has obtained convictions that require 34 offenders to register as sex offenders, including 14 Tier III offenders who must register for the rest of their lives. Along with those convictions, the Office has secured three life prison terms, four sentences for convicted rapists totaling 38 to 57 years in prison, and four sentences for convicted child porn peddlers totaling 21 to 29.5 years in prison. Some of the significant sex offense prosecutions handled by our Office in the past six months are highlighted below.

CURTIS BURDEN, 28, of Barberton was convicted of three counts of Pandering Sexually-Oriented Matter Involving a Minor or Impaired Person. Those convictions resulted from a tip received by the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force indicating that Burden was downloading suspected images of child pornography. Based on that tip, police obtained a search warrant for Burden's residence and his cell phone. A cell phone extraction indicated that Burden's phone contained images of child pornography depicting children as young as six years old. Burden was sentenced to a total prison term of six to nine years and designated as a Tier II sex offender, meaning that he must register as a sex offender annually for a period of 25 years after his release from prison.

DERRICK FISCHER, 53, of Akron was found guilty at trial of two counts of Rape in connection with a 2010 cold case out of Barberton. In 2017, DNA recovered as part of the initial investigation was run through the CODIS database, which produced a match to Fischer. Based on Fischer's previous conviction for rape and history of sexual assaults, he was also determined to be a Sexually Violent predator. The investigation and prosecution of Fischer was conducted as part of the Akron Police Department's Sexual Assault Kit Initiative. Fischer was sentenced to a life prison term with parole eligibility after 20 years.

Drug Trafficking

The Summit County Prosecutor's Office is dedicated to removing drug traffickers from our neighborhoods because their predatory behavior not only preys on users' addiction but also tarnishes the quality of life for everyone in the community. Since Prosecutor Kolkovich's appointment, the Office has obtained first-degree and second-degree felony drug trafficking convictions against 28 defendants, which has led to the imposition of prison terms totaling 100 to 133 years.

As part of the Office's efforts against drug trafficking, we have increasingly sought to hold traffickers accountable when their actions lead to overdose deaths. During Prosecutor Kolkovich's first six months in office, two offenders have been found guilty and sentenced for Involuntary Manslaughter due to their roles in overdose deaths.

MATTHEW CRAGO, 23, of Louisville pleaded guilty to various drug trafficking offenses and Involuntary Manslaughter for his role in the overdose death of an 18-year-old victim. Summit County Sheriff deputies learned through their investigation that Crago sold fentanyl to the victim shortly before his death, which led to Crago's convictions. Crago was sentenced to a total prison term of 5 to 6.5 years.

ANTONIO GOODWIN, 35, of Akron pleaded guilty to various drug trafficking and Involuntary Manslaughter for his role in the overdose death of 48-year-old Nathan Strickland. In June 2023, Nathan was found in his truck at a gas station located on Copley Road near Interstate 77 in Akron. The Summit County Medical Examiner determined that Nathan died of fentanyl toxicity. Investigators with the Akron Police Department subsequently found text messages linking Goodwin to the deadly fentanyl that killed Nathan. Along with another drug trafficking case, Goodwin was sentenced to a total prison term of 10 to 15 years.

ALLEN THOMPSON, 29, of Akron was found guilty at trial of Aggravated Trafficking in Drugs with a Major Drug Offender specification. Thompson's convictions resulted from an operation by the Akron Police Department and Northern Ohio Violent Fugitive Task Force during which officers found more than 730 grams of methamphetamine, a firearm, and nearly \$10,000 in cash in his residence. Thompson was sentenced to a mandatory minimum prison term of 11 years that could extend to 16.5 years in prison based on his behavior in prison.

Victim Advocates

The Criminal Division also oversees the critical work of the Office's Victim Advocates. These dedicated employees ensure that victims of crime receive all of the legally-required notices outlined in Marsy's Law, connect victims with important services to address their needs, and facilitate the healing process. To further help victims navigate the judicial process, the Office has a highly-trained facility dog, Adam, who sits with victims, particularly child victims, to calm them during court hearings and office meetings. The Office is proud to be a state leader in the cause of victims' rights.

Since Prosecutor Kolkovich's appointment, the Office has added a full-time Victim Advocate to maximize the services available to victims of crime. The Office's Victim Advocates have also led the re-launch of the *Start by Believing* public awareness campaign to support victims of crime, especially survivors of sexual assault. As part of the Office's campaign, billboards were installed throughout Summit County encouraging citizens to "Start by Believing" and to publicize the 24-hour hotline run by the Summit County Hope & Healing Resource Center, which houses the Rape Crisis Center and Battered Women's Shelter. Partners throughout the community also collaborated with the Office to "Turn Summit County Teal" to show support for survivors of sexual assault.

"I want our community to be supportive by not judging victims and by reminding victims and survivors that it was not their fault. Instead of asking why something happened, ask how you can help. Your reaction makes a difference."

—Prosecutor Kolkovich



Elliot Kolkovich
Summit County Prosecutor

"I wanted to tell my mom, but I was scared that she would be disappointed in me... I did not call the police. I was too scared."

**Your reaction can make a difference.
How will you respond?**



#StartByBelieving

Juvenile Delinquency

The Juvenile Delinquency Unit handles a wide variety of cases that range from traffic, truancy, and misdemeanor offenses to rape and other violent felonies. The Summit County Prosecutor’s Office is committed to protecting citizens from acts of juvenile delinquency, holding juvenile offenders accountable, and working with community partners and the Juvenile Court to prevent today’s juvenile offenders from becoming tomorrow’s adult defendants. Since Prosecutor Kolkovich’s appointment, the Juvenile Delinquency unit has successfully bound over four of the worst juvenile offenders for prosecution as an adult, three of whom are charged with murder. In addition, the unit has handled 609 delinquency charges, 808 juvenile traffic and unruliness charges, and 298 charges against legal guardians for failure to send their children to school.



Members of the Office dressed in blue to raise awareness about child abuse prevention.

Child Protection Unit

The Child Protection Unit of the Summit County Prosecutor’s Office is responsible for representing Summit County Children Services in child protection cases. Those matters involve situations where children must be removed from living environments due to abuse, neglect, or dependency. SCCS and our prosecutors work to reunify families in safer environments or to place children in secure, legally permanent living arrangements.

471

Abuse, Neglect & Dependency
Complaints Filed

175

Abuse, Neglect & Dependency
Adjudications

37

Permanent Custody
Dispositions

Appeals

The Appeals unit handles post-conviction and post-adjudication proceedings that occur in Adult Felony, Juvenile Delinquency, and Child Protection matters. Assistant Prosecutors primarily appear before the Ninth District Court of Appeals, which also hears appeals from trial courts located in Lorain, Medina, and Wayne counties. Assistant Prosecutors also appear before the Ohio Supreme Court and handle post-conviction litigation in the Court of Common Pleas. In the first six months of Prosecutor Kolkovich's tenure, the Appeals unit has disposed of 138 appeals, obtained favorable decisions in 133 cases, and filed responses in over 100 post-conviction relief cases.



CIVIL/TAX DIVISION

The Civil/Tax Division serves as the law firm for all of Summit County’s government by providing timely and accurate advice to our statutory clients, representing the County in litigation, and overseeing contracts that involve governmental agencies. The Division is also proud to take a significant and proactive role in implementing and enforcing a wide variety of programs and policies administered throughout the County. Assistant Prosecutors in the Civil/Tax Division handle cases filed in both state and federal court as well as in administrative settings.

STATUTORY CLIENTS

County Executive	County Fiscal Office
County Sheriff	County Clerk of Courts
County Engineer	County Council
Board of Elections	Internal Audit
Public Health	Children Services
ADM Board	Medical Examiner
Adult Protective Services	Court of Common Pleas
Developmental	Human Resource
Disabilities Board	Commission
Office of Information	Soil & Water
Technology	Conservation District
Bath Township	Boston Township
Copley Township	Coventry Township
Richfield Township	Northfield Ctr. Township
Springfield Township	Sagamore Hills Township
Twinsburg Township	Barberton Public Library
Akron-Summit Public	Veteran Services
Library	Commission
Stow-Munroe Falls	Cuyahoga Falls Public
Public Library	Library
Hudson Public Library	

*Prosecutor
Opinions: 185*

*Litigation Matters
Handled: 129*



Prosecutor Kolkovich and his outreach team

CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

The Summit County Prosecutor’s Office also serves as the locally-designated child support enforcement agency for the County’s families. CSEA provides children with the opportunity for a stronger, more secure life with the financial and medical support they deserve. To achieve that goal, CSEA uses multiple techniques to collaborate with custodial and non-custodial parents to establish and enforce support orders.

CSEA is rightfully proud of its track record of success, which is reflected in its receipt of 67 different awards from 2001 to 2023, when CSEA yet again received Best Overall Performance for the Metro Caseload Division in Ohio. Since the beginning of the year through August 2024, CSEA’s assistant prosecutors have been able to collect over \$1.7 million in child support from criminal actions and obtained 54 felony non-support convictions. CSEA has also continued to oversee 38,474 cases, providing the full range of child support services from the establishment of paternity to the modification of support orders. In overseeing those cases, CSEA has collected over \$46 million through August 31, 2024 to support the children of Summit County.

Child Support by the Numbers

- CASES MANAGED 38,474
- SUPPORT COLLECTED \$46,008,348
- NON-SUPPORT CONVICTIONS 54



Prosecutor Kolkovich wears green in support of child support awareness



The dedicated staff of CSEA

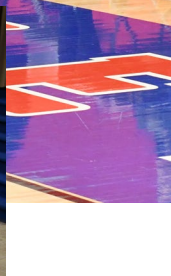
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Summit County Community Outreach Program provides safety information, scam avoidance tips, self-defense classes, and overall crime prevention information throughout Summit County. Since January 2024, Summit County Prosecutor's Office representatives have spoken with over 1,000 people at hundreds of events throughout Summit County. That includes scam prevention tips and a collaboration with Summit County Probate Court to help seniors maintain their choices and protect their independence.



FREE WOMEN'S SELF-DEFENSE CLASSES

Prosecutor Kolkovich is honored to continue the initiative started by his predecessor, Sherri Bevan Walsh, of conducting free self-defense classes throughout the community so that women can learn techniques to avoid becoming victims of crime. Since his appointment, the Office has held self-defense classes in Bath/Richfield Townships, Tallmadge, Mogadore, Copley/Fairlawn, and Cuyahoga Falls. We are thankful to all who have come to learn those techniques and to our community partners who have co-sponsored our classes, including Summit County Clerk of Courts Tavia Galonski, Summit County Councilwoman Christine Higham, and Tallmadge Law Director Megan Raber.



THANK YOU

FOR ALLOWING US TO SERVE YOU



Elliot Kolkovich
Summit County Prosecutor

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