



Mission: Improve the quality of life for children and families in Genesee County through assessment, public awareness and advocacy.

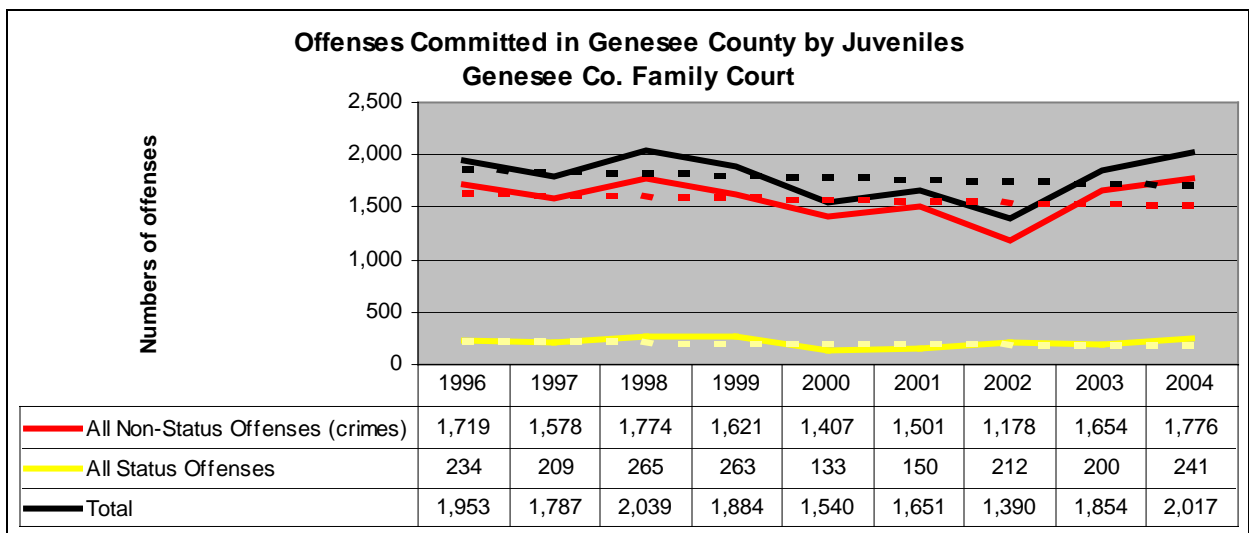
Fact Sheet 5.1 Juvenile Offenses

Status offenses are acts that are illegal only because the person committing them is of juvenile status. Adults cannot be arrested for status offenses. The four major status offense categories used by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile and Delinquency Prevention are: 1) ungovernable (incorrigible), 2) runaway, 3) truancy and 4) underage liquor offenses. In addition, in recent years the purchase or possession by minors of tobacco has been taken increasingly seriously.

The legal system that becomes involved with juvenile offenders has a very different nature than the adult legal system. While a major focus of the adult legal system is punishing offenders, the juvenile justice system is intended to help young offenders to acquire the social skills and habits of behavior that will be necessary to function as independent adults.

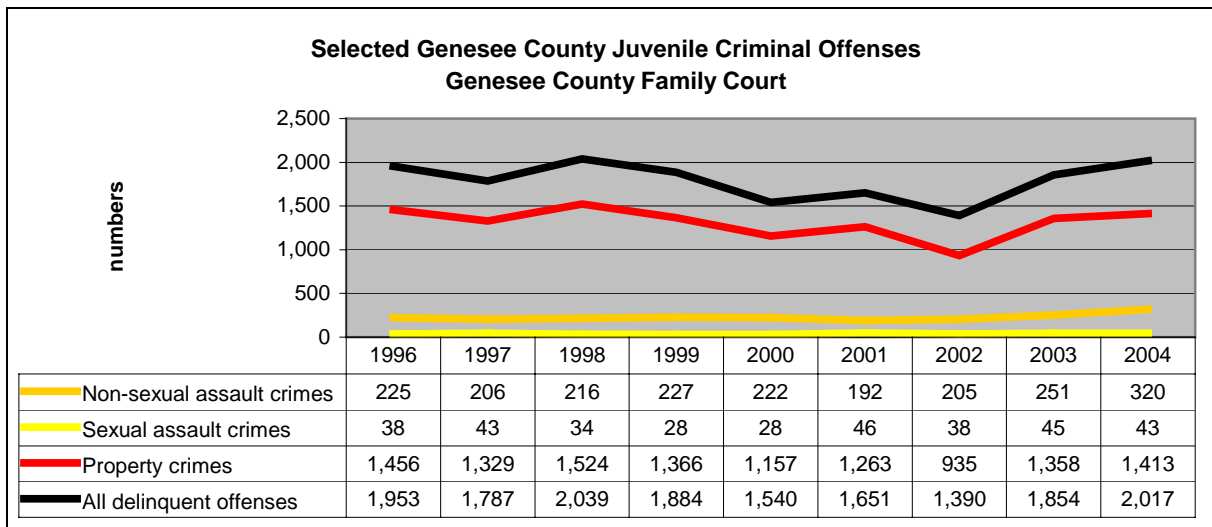
Because it is intended to be of help to troubled youngsters, the focus of the Family Court's efforts is subject not only to absolute rates of offending behavior, but also to priorities that are set for it within the community. In Genesee County, for example, the Family Court judges have placed increased emphasis on addressing school truancy as a problem to be addressed by the coordinated efforts of the school system and the Family Court.

If a youngster habitually skips school and resists the school's efforts to improve attendance, the school may file a school truancy petition with Family Court. If it accepts the petition, the Family Court's efforts will be focused on improving the student's school attendance. Good school attendance is associated with academic success in school, less risk of dropping out of high school, and a greater probability that the student will graduate from high school.

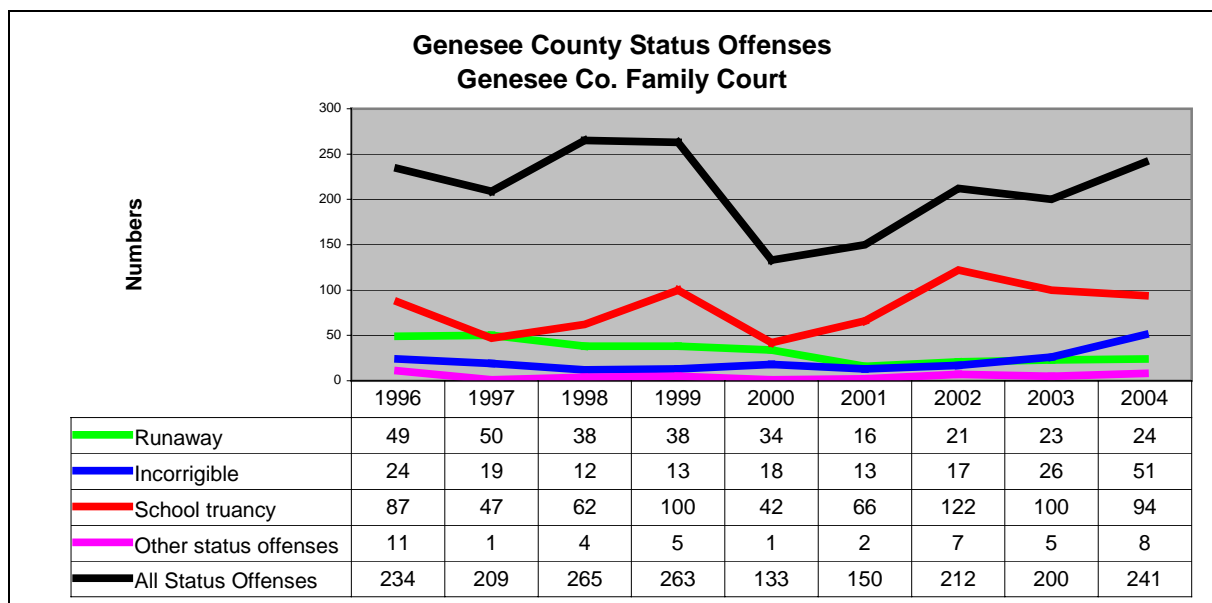


The dotted lines describe the long-term trends in the data. The black line refers to total offenses; the red line refers to juvenile crimes, while the yellow line describes status offenses.

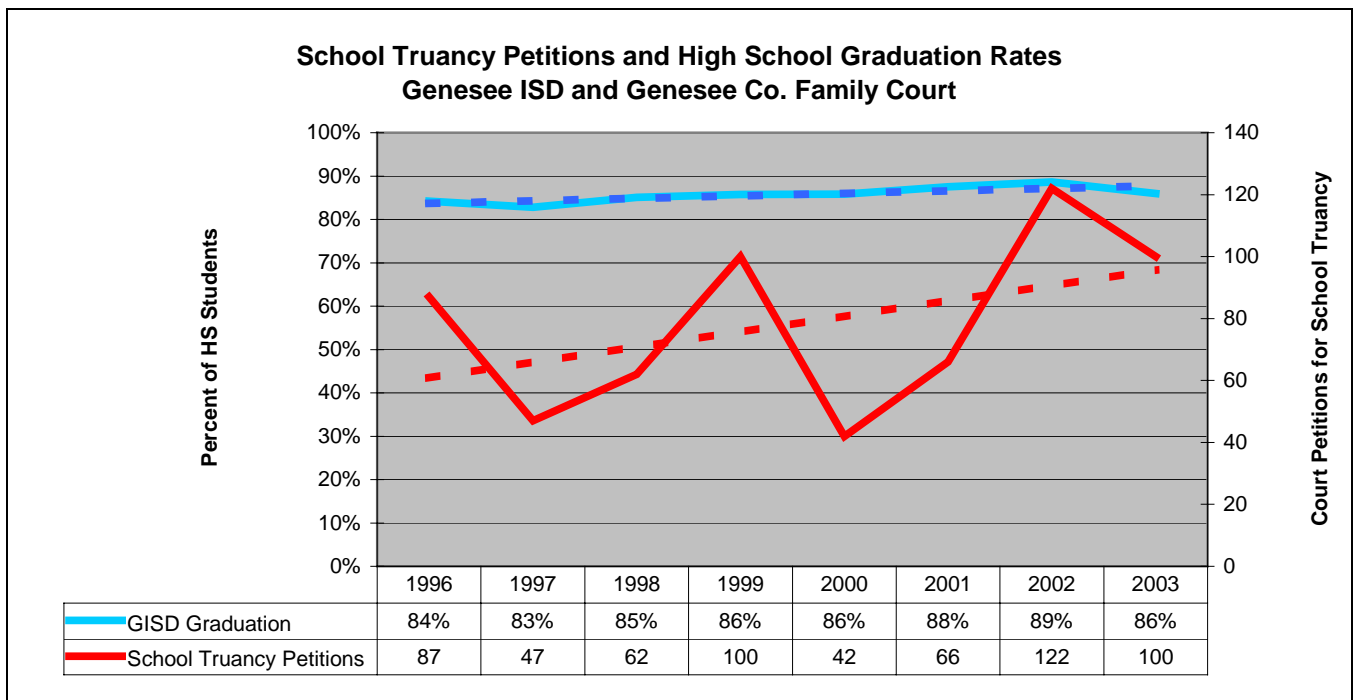
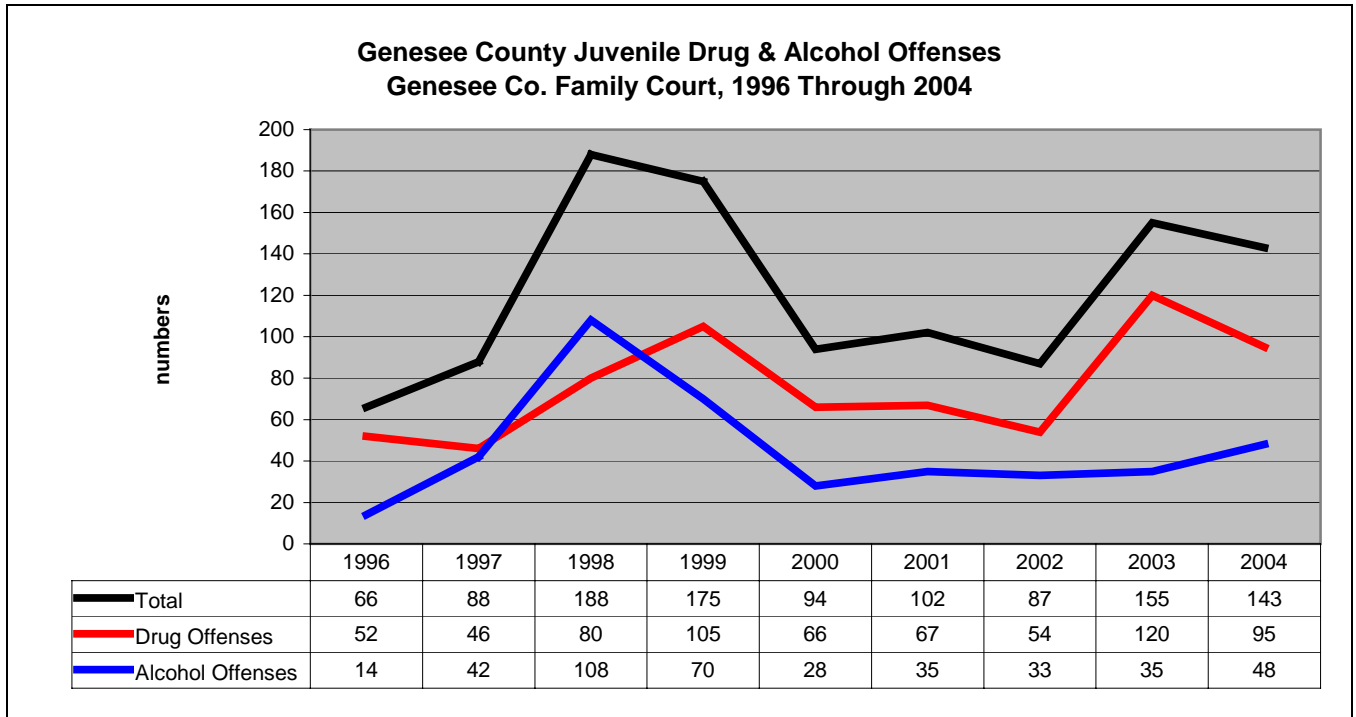
Fact Sheet 5.1: Juvenile Offenses continued...



- Crimes against property by juveniles are far more numerous in Genesee County than crimes of assault against people. The numbers of property crimes have dramatically increased since their low point in 2002.



Fact Sheet 5.1: Juvenile Offenses continued...

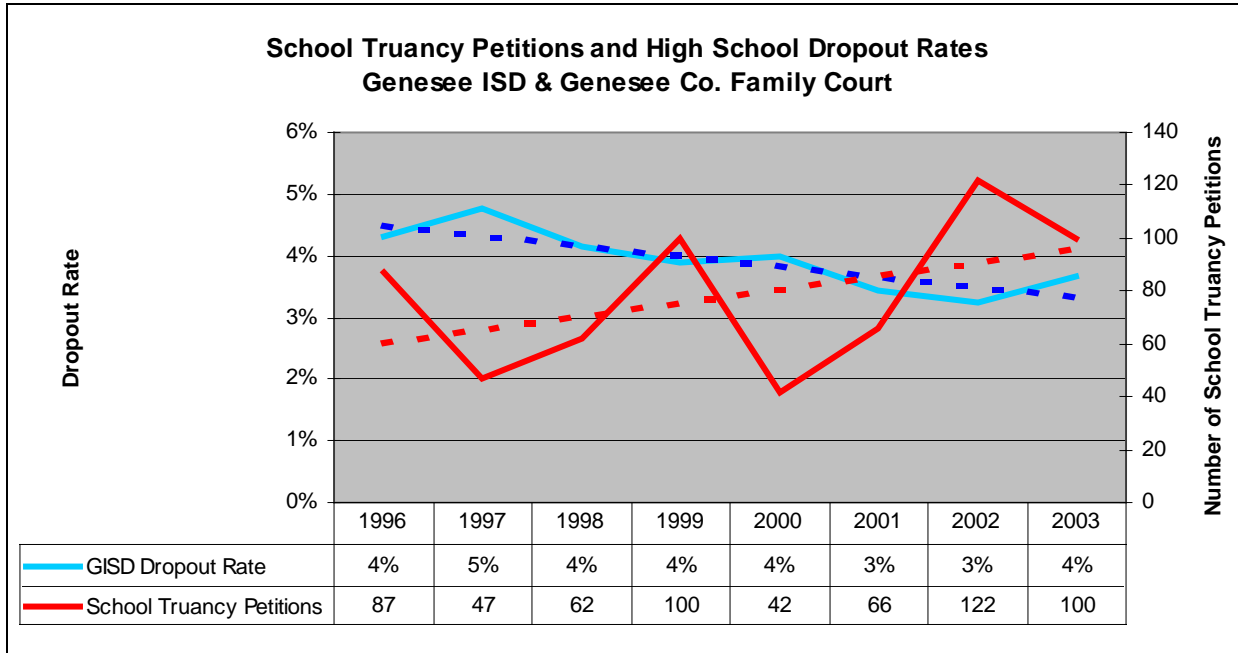


In reference to the graduation rates, the year given is the school year. The graduation rate is the four year estimated graduation rate of 9th graders, according to the GISD. The dotted lines describe the linear trends in the data. The dotted blue line is the trend in high school graduate rates within the county, while the red dotted line represents the trend in school truancy petitions filed in Family Court.

- There has been a steady increase in high school graduation rates and truancy petitions, though the increase in truancy petitions has been more dramatic.



Fact Sheet 5.1: Juvenile Offenses continued...



In terms of dropout rates, the year given is also the school year. The rate is the rate estimated by GISD. The red dotted line once again describes the trend in school truancy petitions during the period. The blue dotted line represents the trend in dropout rates.

- As the number of truancy petitions filed has increased, the dropout rate has tended to decline.
- While the trend is for reductions in juvenile crimes and status offenses between 1996 and 2004, numbers have increased since the low point in 2002. The numbers of status offenses has been more stable than the numbers of criminal offenses.
- The numbers of school truancy petitions filed in Genesee Co. Family Court has varied widely in the years between 1996 and 2004, but has exhibited a general upward trend.
- During the same period, high school graduation rates in Genesee County have risen slightly, while high school dropout rates have steadily declined (with the exception of 2004).

BEYOND THE NUMBERS

The issue of juvenile offenses is a difficult one to understand, and therefore to act upon. While the focus of juvenile justice is helping troubled youth get back on track to a healthy, contributing adult life, the means of giving that assistance varies by Court and by individual presiding officer. This is good, in that it allows each child's case to be considered and treated individually. It makes it difficult, however, to draw conclusions about effective measures. Further, more serious and extreme crimes are handled in adult circuit court despite the offender's age. How does this play into the statistics, and more importantly, what does it tell us about how to help kids? Finally, as we examine trends related to varied types of juvenile offenses, they are perhaps related, as are adult offenses, to other social and economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, etc.



Fact Sheet 5.1: Juvenile Offenses continued...

EXAMPLES OF INTERVENTION EFFORTS

The issues of juvenile offenders must be dealt with from many perspectives. Engaging youth in healthy activities, empowering them to make good decisions, and take charge of their lives and responsibility for their actions can be handled in school, at church, at home, and in the community. Alternative education programs that give youth another chance and another way to succeed can help keep kids in school. After school programs focusing on youth development help children gain assets needed to manage productive lives. Counseling programs, whether faith-based or in the community, give emotional assistance to troubled youth. Juvenile offender programs need to address specific risk factors and use evidence based practices such as cognitive behavior interventions. Our children need programs that enable and empower them to be contributing members of their communities.

- **Multi System Therapy (MST) - Genesee County Community Mental Health** and the **Genesee County Juvenile Court** have begun implementation of a MST Program as a means to address the significant needs of high-risk juveniles and families in Genesee County that are involved with the juvenile court system. MST is an internationally recognized best practice model which is an intensive family-centered, home based treatment model which has proven success in significantly reducing juvenile crime.
- **Intensive Probation Services** - Probation handled by the Court.
- **Department of Human Services** - Sponsors several programs.

Data Source: Juvenile Division, Genesee County Family Court

Revised: 12/5/05