

Cullman County District Attorney's Office



2024 Annual Report

Champ Crocker
Cullman County District Attorney

The background of the entire document is a photograph of the Cullman County Courthouse. The building is a two-story structure with a prominent arched entrance supported by white columns. The words "CULLMAN COUNTY COURTHOUSE" are inscribed in large, light-colored letters across the arch. Above the arch, there are three stars. The sky is blue with some light clouds.

A Letter From **CULLMAN COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY CHAMP CROCKER**

It was my highest honor to take office as your District Attorney on January 17, 2023. I am highlighting my policies of accessibility and transparency with this 2024 Annual Report.

Our main priority in 2024 was tackling the backlog of cases we inherited. As an example, in June, we tried a murder case from 2017, and we have cleared 11 murder cases in two years.

We have maintain an active presence in the local community. I believe that showing up and being accessible to the public is part of being an elective official. This office does not belong to me, it belongs to you, the citizens of Cullman County.



I hope you will find this information helpful. My staff and I are honored to serve you.

Champ Crocker

Table of Contents

- 1 Cullman County District Attorney Office Staff Members**
- 2 Notable Convictions in 2024**
- 3 Crime Trends and Statistics**
- 4-5 Community Involvement**
- 6 Criminal Procedure Steps**
- 7 Victim Services and Restitution**
- 8 Helping Families Initiative**
- 9 Child Support, Worthless Check Unit, and the PreTrial Intervention Program**

District Attorney's Office Staff



Champ Crocker
District Attorney



Tina Burgett
Assistant District Attorney



Nathan Brock
Assistant District Attorney



Kerry Baswell
Assistant District Attorney



Mike Burleson
Assistant District Attorney



Lynicia Lovell
Trial Coordinator



Amanda Gosa
Trial Coordinator



Bradley Williams
Victim Services Officer



Cortney Myrex
Helping Families Initiative



Lisa Dorning
Child Support/
Worthless Check Unit



Sandra Parker
Cost Recovery



Ashley Leak
Cost Recovery



David Nassetta
Investigator



Cindy Hollis
Administrative Assistant



Aimee Jackson
Office Manager
GJ/PTIP



Chastity Puckett
Assistant Office Manager

Notable Convictions in 2024

Cullman County mother gets 2 life sentences for killing sons, ages 9 and 3

AL.com | June 20, 2024



A Cullman County mother was sentenced Thursday to two life sentences for killing her two sons, ages 9 and 3, in 2019, court records showed.

Sara Franco Tapia, 37, of Holly Pond, was initially charged with three counts of capital murder but pleaded guilty to two counts of murder in a plea agreement that spared her the death penalty, records showed.

Tapia was sentenced Thursday to two life sentences by Cullman County Circuit Court Judge Martha E. Williams.

Jury hands down guilty verdict in murder trial

The Cullman Times | April 18, 2024



Jeremy Wayne Higgins, 38, is seen in court Wednesday, April 17. A Cullman County jury found a local man guilty of intentional murder this week in connection with the 2023 death of a Bremen-area woman, returning a verdict Wednesday against Jeremy Wayne Higgins.

Higgins, 38, was convicted at the conclusion of a three-day trial prosecuted by District Attorney Champ Crocker and assistant DA Nathan Brock. Following prosecution witness testimony Wednesday afternoon, the jury returned its verdict after a brief deliberation.

Cullman County man sentenced to 75 years in prison for child rape

WBRC 6 News | March 1, 2024



One man has been sentenced to 75 years in prison after pleading guilty to a rape charge. According to officials, William Samuel Crawford entered a guilty plea of Rape 1st Degree of a child less than 12-years-old.

Officials with the Cullman County District Attorney's Office asked for the maximum sentence due to the severity of the crime.

Maddux sentenced to 99 years in murder of stepfather

Cullman Tribune | September 3, 2024



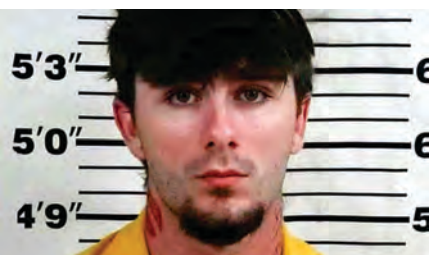
William Thomas Maddux, 34, of Cullman County, on Sept. 3, 2024, was sentenced to 99 years in prison for the Nov. 12, 2017, shooting death of his stepfather, Perry Shoemake, according to Cullman County District Attorney Champ Crocker. A Cullman County jury found Maddux guilty of murder on June 28, 2024.

Following the four-day trial back in June, Crocker thanked the jury for their service and also thanked the Cullman Police Department, which he said did a great job on the case, from the first officer on scene to the investigators.

"Our law enforcement was under constant attack in this trial, but their professionalism prevailed," Crocker said. "It was an honor to work with Mr. Shoemake's family to achieve justice. I didn't know Perry Shoemake, but I will never forget him."

Brown sentenced to 80 years for parking deck murder of Ramos

Cullman Tribune | November 14, 2024



Christopher Dean Eugene Brown, 22, was sentenced to 80 years on Tuesday, Nov. 12, for the murder of Roberto Juarez Ramos, 23, of Blountsville. The shooting occurred on May 21, 2023, at the Cullman City Parking Deck. Brown pleaded guilty to the crime in August of this year.

The Cullman County District Attorney's Office said it presented its sentencing case this week, alongside Ramos' friends and family. District Attorney Champ Crocker shared on Facebook, that, after hearing from both sides, Cullman County Circuit Judge Martha Williams sentenced Brown to 80 years.

McDearmond gets two 99-year sentences in 2023 funeral home shooting

Cullman Tribune | December 11, 2024



Orie Shannon McDearmond of Cullman received two 99-year sentences in connection to a shooting at Cullman Funeral Home in February 2023. Sentenced by Cullman County Circuit Court Judge Gregory Nicholas, McDearmond, who was 33 at the time of the incident, will serve the sentences concurrently.

Cullman County District Attorney Champ Crocker said he is very pleased with the sentencing. "Orie McDearmond is as dangerous as they come," Crocker said. "At sentencing today he showed zero remorse; if anything he acted proud of shooting these victims. The Court sentenced him to 99 years, and deservedly so."

\$3,853,536.83
TOTAL MONEY
RECOVERED
in 2024

This total includes money collected from restitution and child support.

Traffic Court
Restitution **\$10,668.46**

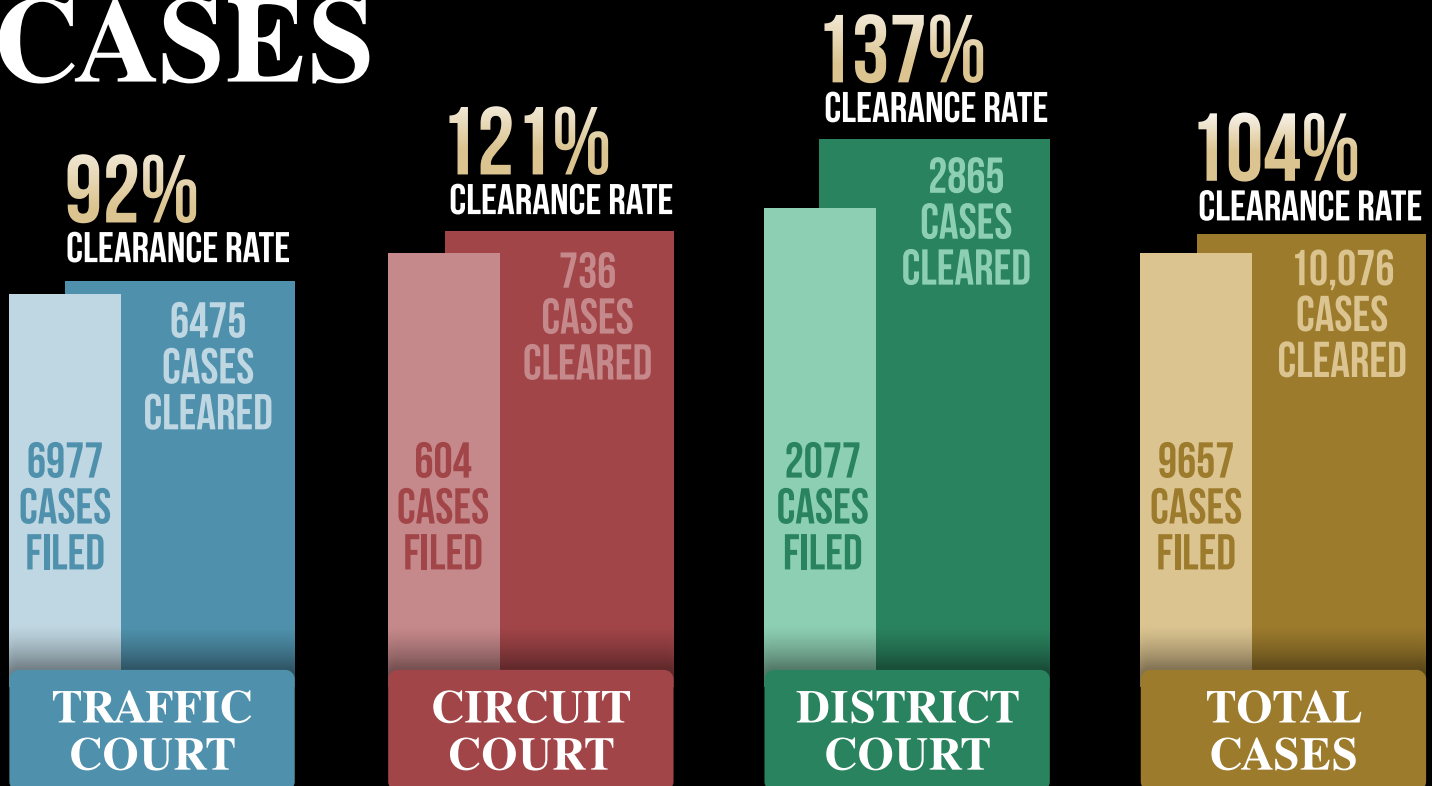
Circuit Court
Restitution **\$223,323.87**

District Court
Restitution **\$33,448.02**

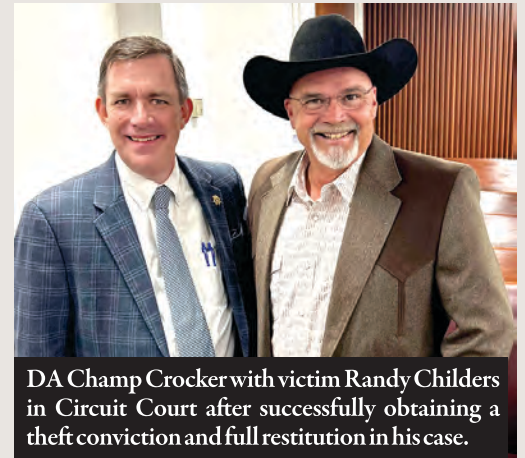
Child
Support **\$3,586,095.48**

COURT CASES

We cleared 10,076 cases in 2024!



The number of cases clear in a year can exceed the number of cases filed when that number includes cases that did not clear in the previous year.



DA Champ Crocker with victim Randy Childers in Circuit Court after successfully obtaining a theft conviction and full restitution in his case.

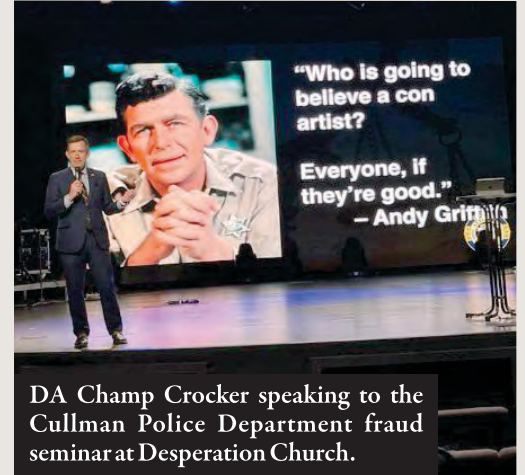
In December 2024 DA Champ Crocker was honored to present the District Attorney's Valor Award to two of our finest local law enforcement officers: Sergeant Josh McNatt of the Cullman County Sheriff's Office and Sergeant Tyler Jackson of the Cullman Police Department.

The DA's Office is proud of the bravery that all of our officers demonstrate daily. This award is for those cases in which an officer's exceptional courage in the face of danger results in the offender's conviction at trial.

Sergeant Jackson was the first officer on the scene after reported shots fired on Cottonwood Drive in 2017. His work was a major factor in our successful prosecution and murder conviction of William Maddux on June 28, 2024.

Sergeant McNatt was the first officer on scene at Cullman Funeral Home in 2023 after a gunman shot two people. There is no doubt that Sergeant McNatt prevented additional casualties. His work was critical to the conviction of Orie McDearmond for two counts of Attempted Murder on September 18, 2024.

These guys don't get enough credit. We are fortunate to have such fine officers in this community, and it is a privilege to work with them.



DA Champ Crocker speaking to the Cullman Police Department fraud seminar at Desperation Church.



DA Champ Crocker and Assistant District Attorney Kerry Baswell and his family after Baswell was sworn in as an assistant district attorney in May of 2024.



DA Champ Crocker congratulating Assistant District Attorney Mike Burleson after being sworn in in July 2024 as an Assistant District Attorney. Mike's wife, Donna Burleson, held his late father's bible as he was sworn in.



DA Crocker and VSO Bradley Williams with Cullman Mayor Woody Jacobs and other city leaders declaring October 2024 as Domestic Awareness Month.



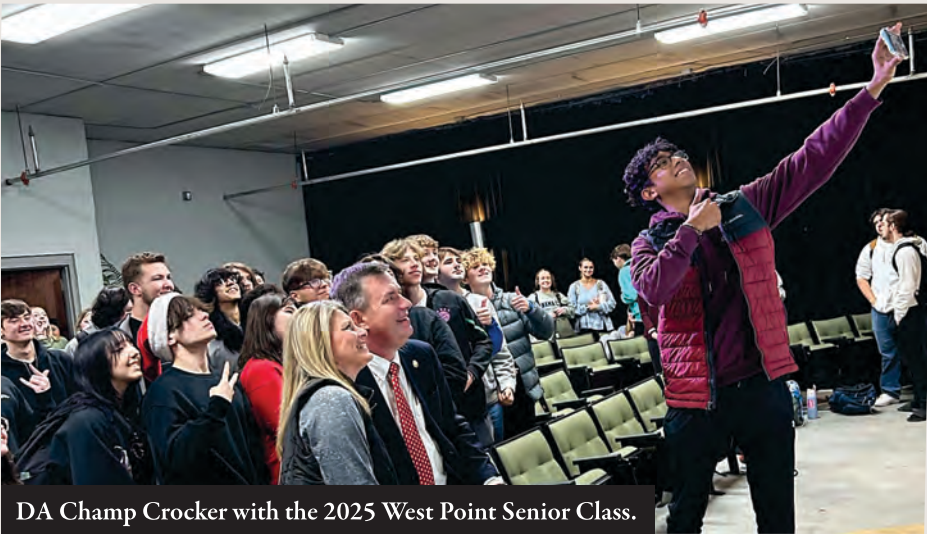
DA Champ Crocker, VSO Bradley Williams, Sheriff Matt Gentry attend a round table discussion held by Senator Tommy Tuberville in Washington D.C during police week in May 2024. Also pictured are Katherine Robertson, Chief Counsel to Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall, Senator Katie Britt, Hoover Police Chief Nick Derzis and Pell City Police Chief Clay Morris.



DA Champ Crocker protesting parole of a violent criminal at the Alabama Bureau of Pardons and Paroles.



DA Champ Crocker appearing on "Elephant in the Room" on 95.5 WRJM.



DA Champ Crocker with the 2025 West Point Senior Class.



DA Champ Crocker speaking with Ron Mosley on 92.1 WKUL.

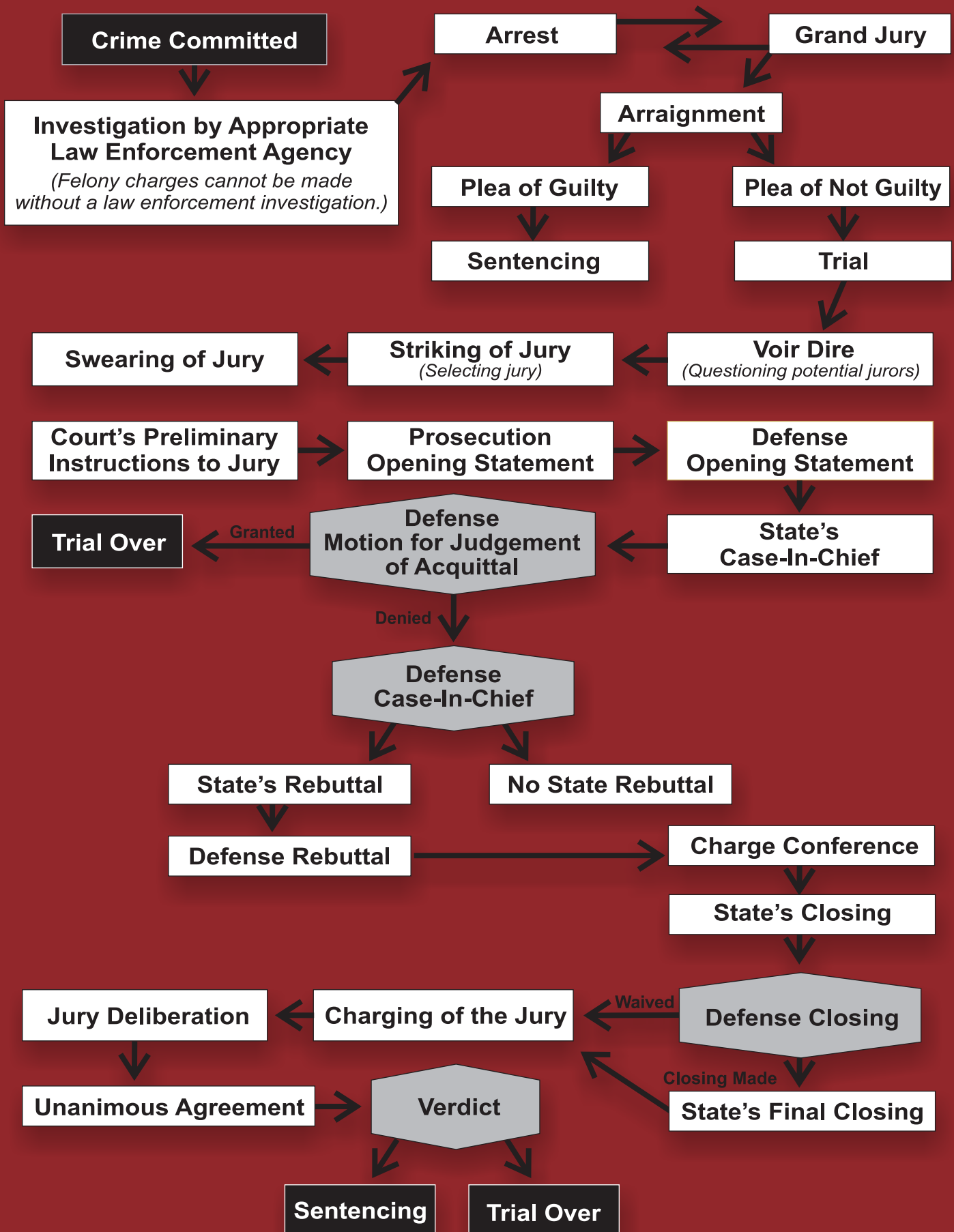


DA Champ Crocker donates computers to Sheriff Matt Gentry to help monitor sex offenders in Cullman County.



DA Champ Crocker with Jared Hudson of Covenant Rescue Group following their presentation on Human Trafficking at the Alabama District Attorneys Association winter conference.

The Criminal Procedure





Victim Services and Restitution

VICTIMS OF CRIMES IN OUR COMMUNITY RECEIVE THE SUPPORT, INFORMATION, AND RESOURCES THEY NEED TO MOVE FORWARD AND RECOVER FROM THEIR EXPERIENCES.



(Picture taken with permission)

DA Champ Crocker and VSO Bradley Williams visited with Colonel Glenn Gildon (ret) and his son, US Army 2nd Lt. Jeb Gildon during his recovery from a violent carjacking. Thankfully, Colonel Gildon is back home and doing well.

We understand that being a victim of a crime can be a difficult and traumatic experience. We work closely with community partners and organizations to ensure that victims have access to the resources they need to heal and rebuild their lives.

We provide information on victim advocacy, counseling services, legal assistance, financial compensation, as well as information on what to expect during the criminal justice process, and how to obtain restraining orders.

Our Office is committed to protecting the rights and dignity of victims of crimes. We believe that by working together, we can create a safer and more supportive community for all.

Visit CullmanDA.org

Click on Divisions> Victim Resources

- ▶ **Victim Responsibilities**
- ▶ **Victim-Bill-of-Rights**
- ▶ **Restitution and Cost Recovery Forms**

Contact Person for
All Victim Services:

Bradley L. Williams
bwilliams @cullmanda.org
256-736-2800

Helping Families Initiative



2,698

Total Involvements
Cullman County and City Schools

63

Mental Health Referrals

48

Community Presentations

29

Basic Needs Referrals

09

Interagency Meetings

The Helping Families Initiative (HFI) is built on a collaborative relationship between the Cullman County District Attorney's Office, community partners, and the surrounding public school systems. HFI seeks to provide prevention and intervention services aimed at eliminating the barriers to the child's emotional, behavioral, and academic success by creating a network of support and referrals to each child and family participating in the Helping Families Initiative.

Once referred to The Helping Families Initiative, the families will be paired with a case officer which will assist them by working to identify the family's specific needs, secure the necessary resources to assist them, as well as be there to support them as they work to reach their goals.



DA Champ Crocker congratulates perfect attendance winners at Vinemont Middle School.



DA Champ Crocker and VSO Bradley Williams attend Parkside Elementary School to celebrate students who have perfect attendance. They were also joined by Amy Hogeland, Assistant Principal; Angie Yarbrough, Director of Federal Programs; Richard Orr, Assistant Superintendent; Kaleb Elrod, Principal; Tonya Cupp, Director of Curriculum and Instruction.



DA Champ Crocker with HFI Team Leader Cortney Myrex.



DA Champ Crocker and Harmony School Principal Kevin Sullins.



DA Champ Crocker and Office Manager Aimee Jackson attended the Cullman County Board of Education in September. Dr. Barnette and DA Crocker signed a Proclamation of September 2024 as Attendance Awareness Month.

Visit CullmanDA.org

Click on Divisions > Helping Families

Contact Person for HFI:

Cortney Myrex

cmyrex@cullmanda.org

267-736-2800

Child Support

The Child Support Division of the District Attorney's Office works with Cullman County Department of Human Resources (DHR) to see that children are financially supported as required by law.

This service includes filing new petitions for support, modification petitions, contempt petitions for failure to comply with court orders of support, income withholding orders, registration and enforcement of foreign support orders under the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act and various other legal referrals sent to the Division from DHR.

Visit CullmanDA.org

Click on Divisions > Child Support

Contact Person for Child Support help:

Lisa Dorning

ldorning@cullmanda.org

256-736-2800

Worthless Check Unit

Self-funded by the District Attorney's Office, the Worthless Check Unit (WCU) was formed to collect restitution for victims of worthless checks. The unit assists businesses and individuals who receive insufficient funds and account-closed checks. Services are free of charge, and if the bad check writer fails to pay through our office, we assist with the prosecution.

Contact Person for

Worthless Check Support:

Lisa Dorning

ldorning@cullmanda.org

256-736-2800

PreTrial Intervention Program

The Cullman County District Attorney's Office Pre-Trial Intervention Program (PTIP) diverts certain first-time nonviolent defendants from the traditional court system into an individualized and supervised restorative program. Not everyone is eligible.

If the defendant successfully completes the program, the case will not be brought to trial. The defendant will be required to work, perform community service, participate in counseling, drug & alcohol treatment, anger management, theft deterrent classes, report to the PTIP Office, pay restitution if applicable, and anything else the District Attorney feels will aid in the rehabilitation of the defendant.

In 2024, 58 individuals successfully completed the PTIP program.

Visit CullmanDA.org

Click on Divisions > Pretrial Diversion

► **PreTrial Intervention Program Application**

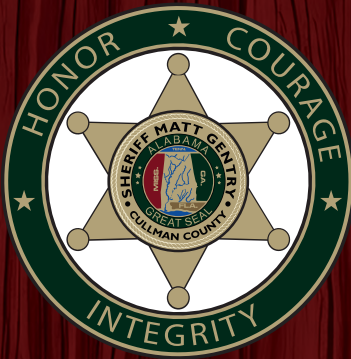
► **PTIP Requirements**

Contact Person for the
PreTrial Diversion Program:

Aimee Jackson

ajackson@cullmanda.org

256-736-2800



**CULLMAN COUNTY
SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

256-734-0342
CULLMANSHERIFF.ORG



**CULLMAN POLICE
DEPARTMENT**

256-734-1434
CULLMANAL.GOV



**CULLMAN
FIRE RESCUE**

256-734-1434
CULLMANAL.GOV



**CULLMAN COUNTY
COURTHOUSE**

256-739-3530
CO.CULLMAN.AL.US



**ALABAMA LAW
ENFORCEMENT
AGENCY (ALEA)**

256-353-0631
ALEA.GOV

Cullman County District Attorney's Office

Cullman County Courthouse, 500 2nd Ave SW, Room 204, Cullman, AL 35055

The Cullman County District Attorney's Office is located in
Room 204 on the 2nd floor of the Cullman County Courthouse

Phone: 256-736-2800
Email: bwilliams@cullmanda.org

www.cullmanda.org