



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2025.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Chesterfield

Program Title: Court Navigator

Program Category: Criminal Justice and Public Safety

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Deborah Dugger

Title: Director

Department: Adolescent Resource Pathways

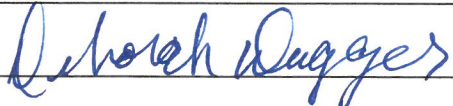
Telephone: 804-748-1857 Website: <https://www.chesterfield.gov/183/Adolescent-Resource-Pathways-CARP>

Email: duggerd@chesterfield.gov

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Deborah Dugger

Title: CARP Director

Signature: 

Category: Criminal Justice & Public Safety

Executive Summary

In November 2020, Chesterfield County Juvenile Justice Services developed a service for youth and their families before the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District court called the Court Navigator. The program came to being after many meetings with our community partners such as law enforcement, juvenile probation, schools, and others, which concluded that families do not always understand the court process or expectations and are often overwhelmed by what is being asked of them. This lack of understanding often leads to families returning to court with only part of the court order completed. Failure to meet the court's orders leads to additional court dates, tying up the court's time and costing the families more in attorney fees and missed work.

The Court Navigator reaches out to families who are referred to the program by the Court Services Unit or court ordered, usually because they have multiple tasks to complete for the court. The Court Navigator assists families in finding the services, completing letters, and submitting documents and payments to the Clerk of the Court. This assistance has reduced court return cases and improved compliance with court requirements, allowing the juvenile court to be more efficient.

The Problem or Need for the Program

When adolescents and families attend court, they usually have questions about what will happen, what did happen, and what they are supposed to do next. Families may leave the court proceeding with a list of things they need to do prior to their next court date. Families may return to court unaware of all that they were ordered to do. They are often confused or overwhelmed and need assistance but may be afraid to ask officials of the court for clarification. Confusion may arise from not knowing where to secure services, not being able to read the judges' handwriting or a language barrier. Failing to comply with the court's orders may have several repercussions ranging from families avoiding court to repeated court return dates to try to complete the requirements of the court. Failure to comply with the court's orders can lead to increased sanctions, costing everyone more time and more money.

When youth fail to return or repeatedly return to court for non-compliance, it burdens the court with longer dockets and burdens the local juvenile justice system with potential detainments, other court-ordered consequences or the serving of subpoenas that could have been avoided.

Description of the Program

To address the issues mentioned in the previous sections, Chesterfield created a part-time position to serve as the Juvenile Court Navigator. The Court Services Unit staff submits a referral, including face sheet and court order, to the Juvenile Court Navigator. The Juvenile Court Navigator initiates contact with families and assists them in obtaining services to comply with the court's orders. The Juvenile Court Navigator maintains regular contact with families, documents contacts which could be needed for court hearings, attends court hearings, and asks restorative questions of youths and their families.

The Juvenile Court Navigator is knowledgeable of resources commonly ordered by the court. For example, an adolescent and family may be ordered to seek mental health services. The Juvenile Court Navigator assists the adolescent and family in scheduling an appointment with Chesterfield County's Department of Mental Health Support Services.

The Juvenile Court Navigator does not report on the family's willingness or unwillingness to participate, and choosing to work with the Juvenile Court Navigator is completely optional for a family. Assistance ranges from meeting a family face-to-face to offering a list of resources to simply talking through the process on the phone – whatever the family needs most at that time. Particularly with our non-English speaking and immigrant population, there is often a lack of understanding and/or fear of the legal system. The Court Navigator can clarify the court requirements, emphasize the importance of complying and clearly outline expectations in a manner that is not as intimidating as a courtroom.

The Cost of the Program

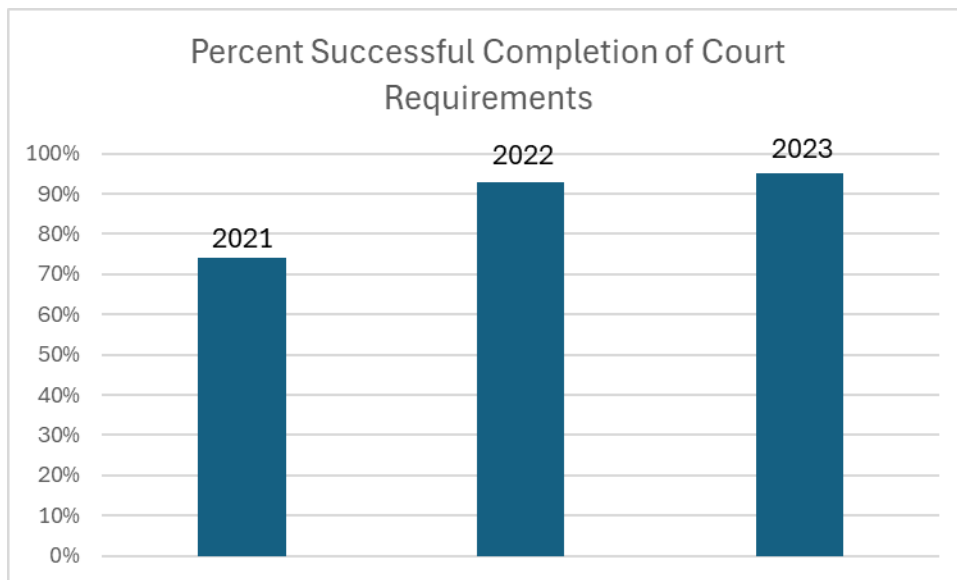
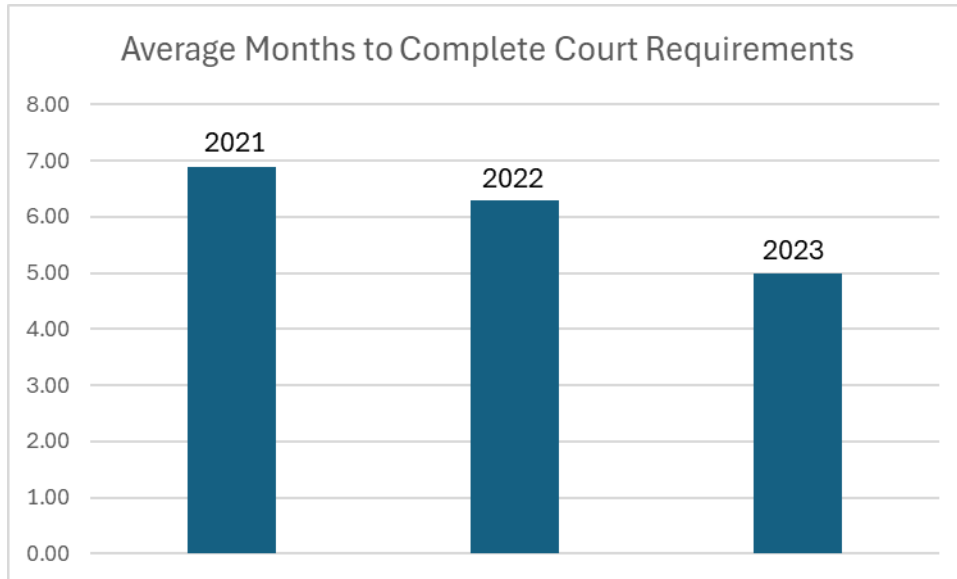
This is a part time, 20 hours per week position. The total expenditures for the year are approximately \$35,000 plus an office space, phone, computer, and language translation services, as needed. The juvenile criminal court docket is generally heard on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The Court Navigator is usually present in court on those days. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, the Court Navigator makes contacts with clients and service providers.

The Results/Success of the Program

While the Court Navigator population represents only a portion of the cases before the juvenile court, we have seen a marked improvement in compliance and reduction in length of time to complete court-ordered services among the clients served by the Court Navigator. There are other factors that may influence compliance and length of time to complete court requirements, but the impact of Court Navigator must be considered a

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pivotal part of that equation. As the Court Navigator has become more familiar with providers in the community, complex legal and court language, resources available, and bilingual resources, compliance with court orders has increased and length of time to complete court requirements has decreased, as exhibited in the charts below.



Worthiness of Award

This program has significantly impacted the Juvenile Justice System in Chesterfield County, particularly for those who are unfamiliar with it. Often, this is the most devastating event that has ever happened in a family and emotions are elevated. People are anxious, angry,

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depressed, fearful and often a combination of all of these. The Court Navigator makes the process more accessible. As stated on their website, the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice mission is "Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice protects the public by preparing court-involved and committed youth to be successful citizens." Court ordered requirements usually aim to teach a lesson, provide needed services, and/or restore trust of the community. Through these efforts, youth learn what is expected of law-abiding citizens. The likelihood of their reoffending is lowered when they understand the consequences of their actions. The Chesterfield Juvenile Justice Services also has a strong component of Restorative Practices which emphasizes inclusion and acceptance in addition to consequences. From this mindset, youth are more likely to see the positive aspects of living a crime-free, productive life.

By having a person serve in this role, court-involved families are made to feel that this county is invested in a successful outcome for them and their children.

Additionally, it makes the court more efficient by reducing the number of repeated hearings. This efficiency reduces the time each case takes and frees up time for the court to hear more cases in less time. This benefit more than justifies the expenditures.

Supplemental Materials (optional)

Letter from the 12th District Court Service Unit Director, William Stanley (separate attachment).

Statement from the 12th District Court Service Unit Chief Judge, the Honorable Scott Landry:

Dear Ms. Brown: I've mentioned a few times how wonderful it is to have a "Cour Navigator". It is long overdue to say in writing. I truly wish we could assign a navigator to every family as they attempt to follow recommendations made by service providers and orders issued by the Court. Prior to the availability of a navigator, it was anticipated that matters would be continued once or twice as folks attempted to avail themselves of services – a three-to-six-month delay. Now, folks not only have a resource to utilize but someone who actively seeks to remove whatever obstacles prevent a family from succeeding. I've seen parents fail time and time again when challenged by having to make appointments with various professionals, coordinate transportation needs, recall Court decisions, and other similar

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tasks. Not so when the Court Navigator assists. Delays in service provision have been minimized, cooperation enhanced, and families are grateful (they say so in Court – how unusual!). Thanks to you and whoever else decided to create this role. It has made a tremendous difference.

Letter of Support

March 5, 2025

Dear: National Association of Counties Achievement Award Judges

It is my pleasure to write a letter of support for Ms. Joeleathia Wilson, Juvenile Court Navigator.

The court navigator position with the Chesterfield Adolescent Resource Pathways (CARP) has been an asset to the 12th District Court Service Unit since its inception. This position has assisted numerous families in Chesterfield County by improving their ability to connect to court ordered resources in the community. Those services include school re-entry, department of social services referrals, and mental health evaluations to name a few. The connections Ms. Joeleathia Wilson has in the community has been invaluable to the youth, parents, and the entire family in some instances. The court navigator has assisted not only the youth involved in the court system, but in some instances the entire family to include parents and siblings. The parents are very appreciative of the efforts of the navigator and has expressed their feelings to the court upon their return. The judges in turn are very appreciative of the court navigator and her assistance with the youth and families. The assistance of the court navigator allows court hearings to be concluded, reduces the likelihood a youth is placed in detention, and reduces the number of court hearings that must be continued due to non-compliance with previous orders. This provides the judges the opportunity to spend quality time with each case before them and make well thought out and appropriate decisions.

Thank you

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William Stanley", written in a cursive style.

William Stanley

12th District Court Service Unit Director (Department of Juvenile Justice)