



GWINNETT COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
END OF YEAR REVIEW 2024



Patsy Austin-Gatson
District Attorney

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MESSAGE FROM GWINNETT COUNTY
DISTRICT ATTORNEY PATSY AUSTIN-GATSON

Dear Gwinnett County residents and stakeholders,

It has been an honor to serve as your District Attorney in the Gwinnett Judicial Circuit, and I am blessed to have received your mandate for a second term!

Our commitment to justice, public safety, and the well-being of our community has driven us to deliver meaningful results, and I'm proud to share with you our many accomplishments for the year of 2024. In the courtroom and the community, we have served with distinction by winning pivotal convictions and expanding our mandate to educate, not just incarcerate. We remain steadfast in our mission to serve the people of Gwinnett County with integrity and dedication.

This end-of-year review publication will highlight our best work and is a roadmap to bigger and brighter destinations. This year, we made significant strides in improving the efficiency and fairness of the criminal justice system in Gwinnett County. Our office successfully prosecuted a wide range of cases, leading the State of Georgia in the effort to eliminate Fentanyl drug overdoses, holding offenders accountable, and ensuring that victims' voices are heard and justice is served. We continue to enhance our collaborative efforts with local law enforcement agencies like the Gwinnet County Sheriff's Office, the Gwinnett County Police Department, the Gwinnett County Schools Police, and other policing agencies. This strengthens our ability to address both immediate and long-term community safety concerns.

We also expanded our efforts in diversion programs by introducing a new initiative and alternatives to incarceration that focus on rehabilitation and reducing recidivism. This approach has not only helped individuals make meaningful changes in their lives, but it has also improved public safety by giving people the tools they need to become productive members of society.

As we look to the future, our office is committed to building on the progress we've made and tackling the challenges that lie ahead. In 2025, we will continue to focus on expanding diversion programs, with the launch of New Directions in Juvenile Court, and the continuation of R.E.D. in Superior Court. We are dedicated to enhancing our community outreach efforts for the benefit of Gwinnett County residents. Access to resources and education is vital to navigate the criminal justice system, allowing residents to lead full and safe lives.

The future is bright, and we are excited to serve this incredible community.

Thank you for your trust and collaboration.

Sincerely,



Patsy Austin-Gatson
District Attorney, Gwinnett County



PATSY
AUSTIN-
GATSON

District Attorney

District Attorney Patsy Austin-Gatson is committed to the excellence of Gwinnett County. Her core values for prosecution are justice and fairness. She made a commitment to work with Gwinnett residents and stakeholders to bring positive progressive change. Paramount to her vision are the safety of Gwinnett, second chances, protecting victims, and keeping young people from entering the criminal justice system. She is also committed to holding those who commit crimes accountable.

D.A. Austin-Gatson is proud to be a history maker, as the first African American and woman to be elected to the District Attorney's Office, Gwinnett Judicial Circuit and she hopes to inspire the next generation of young people.

She started her legal career with the Attorney General's Office of Georgia and then became a law firm associate. In 1992, she opened her law firm, Austin & Associates, and handled criminal, family, and civil rights employment cases. Prior to her election, she was Supervising Attorney in the Gwinnett County Solicitor's Office.

D.A. Austin-Gatson graduated from Emory University, School of Law, and received a Bachelor of Science from Syracuse University, School of Human Development. She is admitted to practice in all Georgia Superior and State Courts, the Court of Appeals, and the Georgia Supreme Court. She is also admitted to the 11th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals and Federal Courts in the Northern, Middle, and Southern Districts. D.A. Austin-Gatson has served in multiple capacities as a volunteer. She has practiced law for 35 years.

She has been a Gwinnett County resident for 26 years where she and her husband, Travis Gatson, raised three children and have four grandchildren.

Since taking office in 2021, the team has won the FBI-LEEDA Trilogy Award, the 2024 Georgia Crime Victim Service Collaborative and Innovative Project Award, the 2022 Child Fatality Review Committee Metro County of the Year Award, and Certification from the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police and the United States Department of Justice under the Executive Order on Safe Policing for Safe Communities.



GWINNETT COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Gwinnett County District Attorney's Office is to seek and pursue justice on behalf of victims of crime through the fair and ethical prosecution of those who commit offenses in our community. Our office strives to impact the community through education, engagement, and reduction in recidivism while working vigorously to keep the community safe so that all Gwinnett County citizens and residents can thrive.

RULE 3.8: SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF A PROSECUTOR

"A prosecutor has the responsibility of a minister of justice and not simply that of an advocate. The responsibility carries with it specific obligations that the defendant is accorded procedural justice and that guilt is decided upon the basis of sufficient evidence."

State Bar of Georgia

OFFICE OVERVIEW

DISTRICT ATTORNEY PATSY AUSTIN-GATSON		
INVESTIGATIONS	SPECIAL VICTIMS UNIT CHILD/ELDERLY CRIMES	PREPARATION AND TRIALS
ACCOUNTABILITY COURTS	DRUG/GANG TASK FORCE	JUVENILE COURT
VICTIM/WITNESS PROGRAM	FORENSICS LAB INVESTIGATIONS	SWORN/NON-SWORN ADMINISTRATION
JUSTICE/COMMUNITY INITIATIVES	11 PROSECUTORIAL DIVISIONS	PRE-TRIAL INTERVENTION DIVERSION PROGRAMS
GRAND JURY	CONVICTION INTEGRITY	COLD CASE

FORENSIC LAB

The Gwinnett County District Attorney's Office includes a Computer/Phone Forensics Lab within its Criminal Investigations Division. This specialized unit is staffed by dedicated law enforcement professionals with an average of 15 years of experience in various areas of expertise. Their responsibilities encompass reviewing and analyzing digital evidence from computers and mobile devices to support the prosecution of felony cases. This unit also provides assistance to other policing agencies in the region, including the FBI.



See how the Forensic Lab helped a Gwinnett couple recover nearly \$50,000 after falling prey to a bank scam:



SPECIAL VICTIMS UNIT

The SVU of the Gwinnett County District Attorney’s Office focuses on prosecuting cases involving sensitive crimes such as sexual assault, child abuse, domestic violence, elder abuse, and human trafficking. This unit is dedicated to addressing the unique challenges of these cases, providing support to victims, and ensuring justice is served while minimizing further trauma.



JUVENILE DIVISION

The Juvenile Division of the Gwinnett County District Attorney’s Office is responsible for handling cases involving minors who are accused of violating criminal laws. This unit plays a key role in addressing juvenile delinquency while focusing on rehabilitation, accountability, and public safety.



DRUG & GANG TASK FORCE

The Drug and Gang Task Force of the Gwinnett County District Attorney’s Office focuses on combating illegal drug activity and gang-related crimes within Gwinnett County, Georgia. This specialized unit works to disrupt and dismantle criminal organizations involved in drug trafficking, gang violence, and other associated offenses.



VICTIM WITNESS PROGRAM

The Victim Witness Program of the Gwinnett County District Attorney’s Office is designed to support victims and witnesses involved in criminal cases handled by the DA’s office. The program provides resources, information, and assistance to help individuals navigate the criminal justice process.

FBI-LEEDA TRILOGY AWARD

The Gwinnett County District Attorney's Office is the first prosecutorial office in the nation to be honored with the prestigious FBI-LEEDA Trilogy Award in recognition of its commitment to law enforcement leadership and excellence.

The FBI-LEEDA Trilogy Award is granted to agencies and individuals who complete the FBI-LEEDA Leadership Trilogy, consisting of the Supervisor Leadership Institute, Command Leadership Institute, and Executive Leadership Institute. These intensive programs equip participants with advanced skills in ethical leadership, crisis management, and strategic decision-making, reflecting a dedication to fostering professionalism and integrity in law enforcement. The office is being recognized because its entire investigative command staff – Chief Investigator Adam Gardner, Assistant Chief Investigator Chris Ford, and Assistant Chief Investigator Andres Rodriguez – have met the requirements.

In addition, Chief Assistant District Attorney John Melvin and Investigator Robert Turner completed FBI-LEEDA Trilogy requirements at other agencies before joining the DA's Office.



GWINNETT NAMED 2024 STATEWIDE VICTIM ADVOCACY AWARD RECIPIENT

On April 6, 2024, the Gwinnett County District Attorney's Office was recognized as the 2024 Georgia Crime Victim Service Collaborative and Innovative Project Award recipient. The award acknowledged the efforts of the office's Victim Witness Program throughout 2023 to provide essential services and solace to crime victims. The award was presented by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council in recognition of the program's many initiatives, including the ongoing web series Community Conversations, the annual Victims of Crime Candlelight Vigil, outstanding leadership of the Child Fatality Review, and compilation and circulation of the Resource Guide.





LEAD ACADEMY

Norris Lewis | Managing Assistant

In 2024, the Gwinnett County District Attorney's Office proudly graduated its sixth staff member from the Gwinnett County LEAD Academy. Norris Lewis, Managing Assistant District Attorney, successfully completed the 2024 LEAD Academy in November.

The LEAD Academy is designed to support supervisors in Gwinnett, providing a customized foundation for management development within County Government. The program's curriculum thoughtfully integrates the County's culture, expectations, policies, and procedures.



INTERNAL MANAGEMENT ACADEMY

Beth Hansen | Legal Manager

The IMA program is designed to prepare both current and future leaders for the responsibility, challenges, and privilege of upholding the Gwinnett Standard of excellence, stewardship, and integrity. Focused on developing high-potential leaders, the program explores key leadership competencies, including servant and inclusive leadership. Participants are introduced to emotional intelligence, with the goal of enhancing relationships to better serve the county. Additionally, the program aims to transform leadership approaches and optimize potential, helping leaders stay on track throughout their careers with the Gwinnett Judicial Circuit. Legal Manager Beth Hansen was selected for the 2024 cohort, which concluded in January 2025.

CONVICTION & CRIME RATES

In 2024 the Gwinnett County District Attorney's Office achieved stellar Conviction Rates. Overall, the Office resolved 3,172 cases in 2024.

"This achievement was a result of all 11 divisions and our special units working together with the many policing agencies to ensure that victims receive just and fair outcomes." – District Attorney Patsy Austin Gatson

93% conviction rate in **JURY TRIALS**

**Encompasses all general and special units charges*

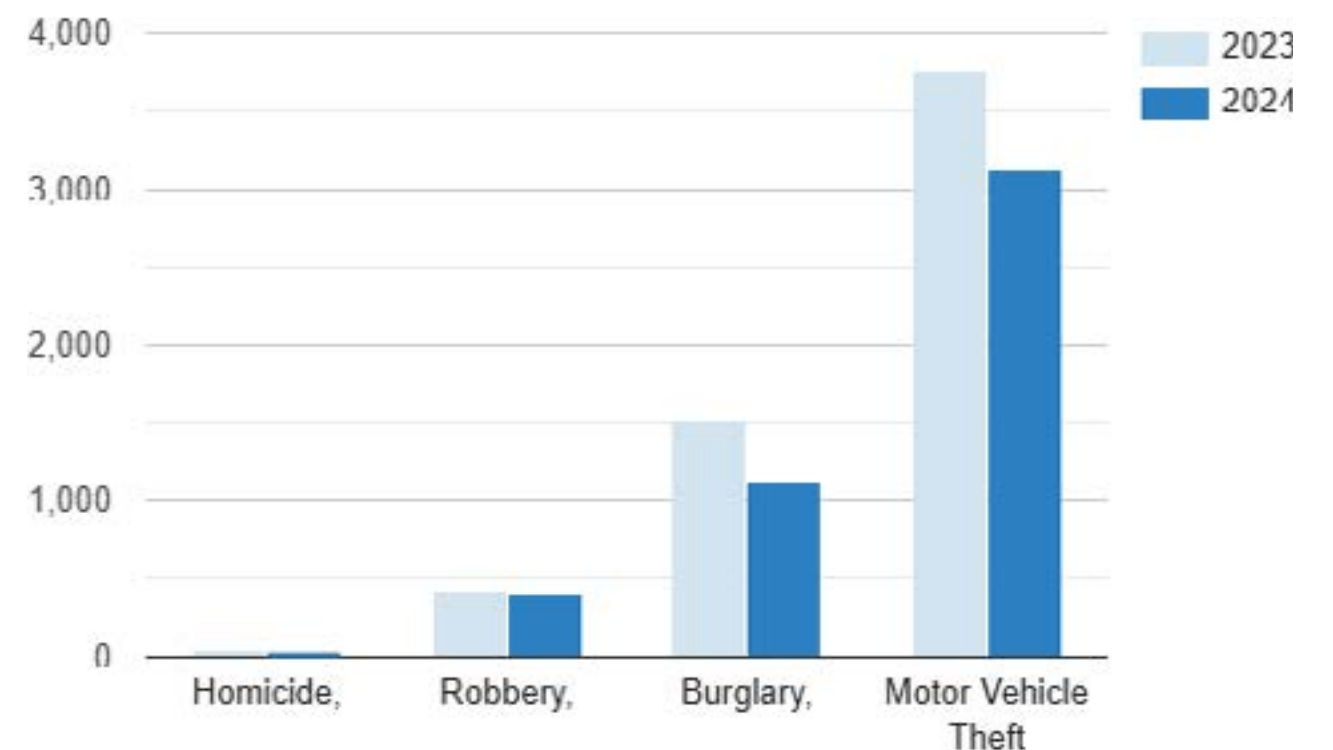
90% conviction rate in **SEX CRIME TRIALS**

***Nationwide, about 56% of these type of cases result in conviction when referred for prosecution*

100% conviction rate in **DRUG AND GANG TRIALS**

100% conviction rate in **MURDER TRIALS**

GWINNETT COUNTY CRIME STATISTICS 2023 - 2024



From 2023 to 2024:

- Homicides in Gwinnett County decreased by 9.5%
- Robbery in Gwinnett County decreased by 2.9%
- Burglary in Gwinnett County decreased by 25.9%
- Motor Vehicle Theft in Gwinnett County decreased by 16.8%



"It requires people who are passionate about their job and people who are knowledgeable and that's what we have in Gwinnett. I can see that through the different things we learned throughout the class"

**– KARLA
HERNANDEZ MESA**

CITIZENS ACADEMY

The Gwinnett County District Attorney's Citizens Academy wrapped up its second year in 2024, with 33 participants. This program offers a deeper understanding of the multifaceted working of the criminal justice system. Over nine weeks, participants directly engaged with the judicial process—building connections with law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges. By shedding light on the role of the District Attorney's Office, our citizen's academy inspires a more informed and engaged community.



JUNIOR DISTRICT ATTORNEY AND INVESTIGATOR MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

The Gwinnett County District Attorney’s Office sponsored a third year of the Junior District Attorney and Investigator Mentorship Program in 2024.

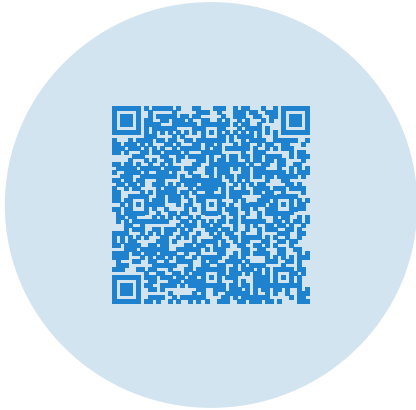
This year, 44 participants completed the program, gaining hands-on engagement with the criminal justice system, exploring the roles of the court, law enforcement, and corrections.

The high school students participating in the program are exposed to practical experiences working with assistant district attorneys, investigators, and administrative staff. Through these and other interactions, they receive training in law, self-discipline, and a variety of related skills.

The students were able to display all of the knowledge they gained in the program by participating in mock trials, in which they took on the roles of prosecuting attorneys, defense attorneys, witnesses, bailiffs, and judges.

The District Attorney’s Office launched its first Junior District Attorney and Investigator Mentorship Program in 2022 with just 12 students from local high schools. In 2024, the program continued to thrive having grown more than four times the size of the inaugural cohort.

Visit GwinnettCounty.com/JuniorDA or **scan the QR code** to apply for the upcoming program!



“Being able to experience it firsthand and feel like I was genuinely in a courtroom and really representing my client, it really solidified the fact that I do want to go into law.”

– CHLOE MOORE



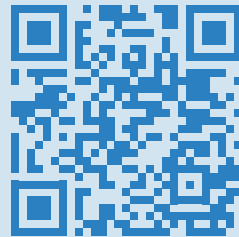


YOUTH SUMMIT

The District Attorney Office launched its first Youth Summit program April 2 – April 3, 2024, with 33 students from our local middle and high schools in the Gwinnett County district. The Youth Summit is designed to inspire, educate, and empower students from ages 12 to 18. With engaging speakers, thrilling sports activities, exciting entertainment, and enriching curriculum, there's something for everyone! The event is open to middle and high school students. Stay tuned for details about the next Youth Summit!

Visit GwinnettCounty.com/YouthSummit to apply for the next cohort!

Scan the QR code below to watch the Youth Summit video



NEW DIRECTIONS

New Directions is an outreach initiative in partnership with the Gwinnett County District Attorney's Office, aimed at guiding youth toward positive life choices and helping them succeed while contributing to their community. This twelve-week pre-trial diversion program, in collaboration with Be More Positive Enterprises, Inc., is designed for first-time juvenile offenders with a focus on redirecting them toward positive behaviors.

The program provides participants with the necessary guidance and support to thrive both personally and academically. By fostering accountability and encouraging community engagement, New Directions seeks to reduce repeat offenses and empower youth to become active, positive members of society.

Utilizing the "I Have Willpower" curriculum, the program is structured in four phases, leading students through a journey of self-awareness, growth, and future-focused thinking. It addresses the root causes of poor decision-making and teaches young people to take responsibility for their choices.



REHABILITATION ENABLES DREAMS PROGRAM

Rehabilitation Enables Dreams (RED) continues to partner with the Gwinnett County District Attorney’s Office to deliver a 12-month Pre-Adjudication Restorative Justice Program. Based in Atlanta, Georgia, RED is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization focused on permanently diverting non-violent offenders from the criminal justice system. This mission is achieved through targeted programming designed to enhance participants’ social, civic, financial, and digital literacy.

RED’s evidence-based digital curriculum equips participants with the essential skills—both soft and technical—needed to exit the justice system and successfully reintegrate into their communities. During program orientation, participants receive laptops providing access to RED’s cloud-based curriculum. By the second month, participants are paired with peer forensic mentors who actively guide them through the remainder of the program.

Core modules of the curriculum include:

- Emotional intelligence development
- Voting rights and procedures education
- Guidance on effective police-citizen interactions
- Financial literacy and planning
- Career readiness preparation

Each month, participants engage in pro-community outings designed to reinforce the skills learned in the program. Beyond the digital curriculum, the program includes in-person classroom sessions, community events, and mentorship. Participants without a high school diploma are automatically enrolled in the GED Certification Program and provided access to immediate and long-term employment opportunities.

RED’s approach transforms courtrooms into dynamic learning environments, offering education, mentorship, and community-based experiences. Upon program completion, participants achieve significant milestones:

- Case dismissal
- Georgia Crime Information Center criminal records restricted (expunged)
- Case files sealed

Graduates are further supported with referrals to higher education institutions, vocational training programs with job placement, aftercare services, or direct workforce opportunities. This comprehensive process restores social mobility and empowers participants to become responsible, thriving members of their communities.

RED’s restorative justice initiative sets a new standard for Georgia’s 159 counties, surpassing traditional accountability court programs. By combining education, mentorship, and meaningful community engagement, RED offers a transformative solution that fosters long-term success and breaks the cycle of recidivism.



“Life is truly about how you respond to adversity.”

– DAVID LEE WINDECHER



DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE IN THE COMMUNITY

Gwinnett County District Attorney's Office is committed to fostering strong relationships with the community and ensuring justice is not only served but also understood and embraced by those it serves. Through a variety of outreach programs that the DA collaborates with, supports or sponsors, the office strives to educate, empower, and engage the community to develop more informed residents and stakeholders who help to build a safer and more united Gwinnett County. This includes aiding agencies and organizations like the Gwinnett County Sheriff's Office, Partnership Against Domestic Violence, and Read Across America, and participating in events like the Gwinnett County Annual Multicultural Festival, Elder Abuse Awareness seminars, and the Gwinnett Public Safety Fall Festival.

Through these initiatives, partnerships, and collaborations, and many more, the Gwinnett County District Attorney's Office goes beyond prosecuting crimes to foster a proactive approach to community well-being, ensuring that all residents feel supported and secure.



ANNUAL CRIME VICTIMS CANDLELIGHT VIGIL

Each year, the Gwinnett County District Attorney's Office honors individuals in our community who have been impacted by crime. The DA's Office, particularly the Victim Witness program, works tirelessly year-round to ensure victims receive the support they need as they navigate the judicial system. The annual Crime Victims Candlelight Vigil takes this commitment a step further, offering a space where those affected by crime can find comfort, healing, and solace. This event serves to honor victims, unite the community, raise awareness, and highlight the dedication of the Victim Witness program in advocating for justice and supporting victims.

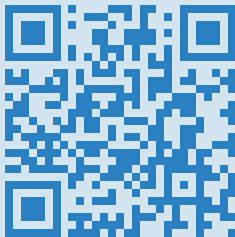
Since its inception in 2021, the Crime Victim Candlelight Vigil has continued to grow. This year, participants joined both in person and virtually via online streaming.



COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Community Conversations is an initiative that discusses different topics of life to help educate the community. It's led by Gwinnett District Attorney Patsy Austin-Gatson and aims to spread awareness and reduce the gap between the community and resources that are available to community members.

Scan the QR code to watch our Community Conversations.



DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE LAW ENFORCEMENT APPRECIATION AWARD

The Gwinnett County District Attorney's Office proudly hosted the 2024 Law Enforcement Appreciation Awards in November, celebrating the dedication and bravery of those who serve and protect our community.

This year, 10 exceptional honorees were recognized for their outstanding contributions, leadership, and unwavering commitment to justice. These teams and individuals inspire us all to continue striving for a safer, stronger community.



ABOVE & BEYOND AWARD

In 2004, the DA's Office introduced the monthly Above & Beyond award to recognize staff members who elevate their roles in exceptional ways, going beyond expectations in service to our mission and community. While every member of our team is outstanding, this award honors those whose contributions set them apart through their dedication and extra effort.

Pictured with awards:

- ADA. John Nichols
- Legal Assistant Brazier Bruce
- Inv. Jonathan Lemos
- Inv. Jessica Pironis and Inv. Kletus Sloan
- Community Outreach Director Terrell Patrick and Outreach Assistant Ailyn Hernandez



Patsy Austin-Gatson
District Attorney

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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the Gwinnett County District
Attorney's Office.