



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADVOCACY

ANNUAL REPORT - FISCAL YEAR 2025

DPA LEADERSHIP TEAM



Damon L. Preston
Public Advocate



Melanie Lowe
Deputy Public
Advocate



Samuel Cox
General Counsel



Cheyla Bush
Diversity, Equity,
and Inclusion
Director



Cara Lane Cape
Executive Staff
Advisor



Jeff Edwards
Protection &
Advocacy Director



Melanie Foote
Education,
Strategic Planning,
& Recruitment
Director



Terra Harper
Law Operations
Director



Brad Holajter
Conflict & Contract
Services Director



Beth McMahon
Post-Trial Director



Jennifer Wittmeyer
Trial Director



B. Scott West

After 25 years of service as a public defender, DPA's Deputy Public Advocate B. Scott West retired on September 13, 2024. During Scott's tenure he served the citizens of the Commonwealth in many capacities including:

- 1999 – 2001 Hazard Trial Attorney
- 2001 – 2007 Murray Directing Attorney
- 2007 – 2011 Bluegrass Region Manager
- 2011 – 2017 General Counsel
- 2017 – 2024 Deputy Public Advocate

PUBLIC ADVOCACY COMMISSION



Whitney Lawson
Chair



Daniel Venters
Vice-Chair



Roula Allouch



LaCosta Booth



Jennifer Brinkman



Crystal Coel



Daniel Goyette



Chynna Hibbitts



Frederick Moore



David Sloan



Raquel Wilson



Allison Wiseman

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DPA Leadership / Public Advocacy Commission.....	2	Conflict & Contract Services Division.....	11
DPA By The Numbers.....	3	Education, Strategic Planning, &	
2025 Celebration and Recognition Ceremony.....	4	Recruitment Division.....	12
Trial Division.....	5	Law Operations Division.....	13
Assignments by County.....	6-7	Defender Services Branch.....	14
DPA Public Defender Offices.....	8-9	Protection & Advocacy Division.....	15
Post-Trial Division.....	10	2025 Trial Division Caseload Report.....	16

DPA BY THE NUMBERS

\$87,316,301

Personnel Expenses

\$12,569,374

Operating Expenses

\$640

Funding Per
New Trial Case

130,600

Total New Trial Cases

341.6

New Cases
Per Trial Attorney

\$1,031

Funding Per
Conflict Case

6,498

Cases Assigned to
Contract Attorneys

170

Private Attorneys
Assigned to DPA Cases

5,028

Alternative Sentencing
Plans Presented to Courts
by ASWs

3,378

Clients Not Incarcerated
After ASW Plan Approved
by Court

\$57,345,435

Potential State Savings from
Approved Plans in First Year

65 Clients Obtained Post-Trial Relief,
Potentially Saving **511** Years of Prison Time

2025 CELEBRATION AND RECOGNITION



ELIAS KANG-BARTLETT
DEFENDER UPRISING AWARD



HAYLEY HOFMANN
DEFENDER UPRISING AWARD



DANIELLE J. SIPPLE
ROSA PARKS AWARD



JENNIFER BOULDJEDIEN
PROFESSIONALISM AND
EXCELLENCE AWARD



DUNCAN VARDA
PROFESSIONALISM AND
EXCELLENCE AWARD



TRACI BOWMAN
CINDY LOVELL DOWNS
AWARD



JACKIE S. KNARR
CINDY LOVELL DOWNS
AWARD



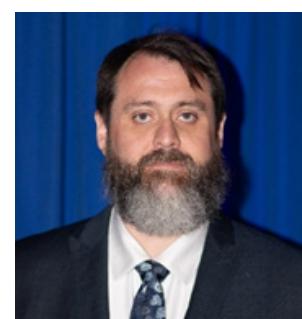
SIRISSA E. LITTLE
IN RE: GAULT AWARD



JOHN M. ROSENBERG
PUBLIC ADVOCATE AWARD



W. CHRIS TRACY
EDWARD C. MONAHAN
AWARD



GREG COULSON
FURMAN AWARD



TAYLOR JANAÍ BRYAN
ANTHONY LEWIS MEDIA
AWARD



JAMES ISAAC CHAMBERLAIN
DEFENDER LEADERSHIP
AWARD



ERIN HOFFMAN YANG
CLARENCE EARL GIDEON
AWARD



SHANDA WEST-STILES
NELSON MANDELA LIFETIME
ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

TRIAL DIVISION

Ninety-Seven New Trial Division Defenders Immediately Make a Difference

When she first came into Circuit Court, a young woman was facing a Bail Jumping charge while pregnant. She was held without bond. The situation was bleak; she sat in jail with no path forward, separated from the care she and her unborn child desperately needed. Attorney Alyssa Wiggins, a recent graduate of University of Kentucky's Rosenberg School of Law, stepped in and spent hours negotiating with the prosecutor, ultimately persuading them to reinstate the woman's original bond and allow her release if she entered a Mommy and Me treatment facility. With Alyssa's guidance, the client agreed to go to Karen's Place, where she not only thrived in treatment but welcomed a healthy baby into the world.

At sentencing months later, Alyssa presented her client's remarkable progress: a woman who had overcome addiction, embraced treatment, kept custody of her newborn, and was striving to reunite with her other children. Despite the seriousness of the Bail Jumping charge, Alyssa successfully argued for probation rather than prison time. The judge agreed, giving her client the chance to continue treatment and move forward with her family. Today, mother and child remain at Karen's Place, healthy and together—an outcome made possible by Alyssa's persistence, compassion, and unwavering advocacy.

DPA's Trial Division welcomed 97 new attorney-track employees in FY25. Over a third of the new recruits graduated from Kentucky law schools. The remaining new lawyers joined DPA from 19 other states, including one new defender who moved 2,101 miles to join the good work happening here. Alyssa's story is just one example of the ways these zealous advocates are making a difference in the lives of clients and communities across the Commonwealth.



Jennifer Wittmeyer
Trial Director

**TOTAL
NEW TRIAL
CASES
130,600**

BREAKDOWN OF REPRESENTATION TYPE

25,065	CIRCUIT COURT FELONY CASES (NON-REVOCATIONS)
33,144	DISTRICT COURT FELONY CASES
38,359	DISTRICT COURT MISDEMEANOR CASES
13,236	COURT REVOCATION CASES
6,473	JUVENILE CASES
3,662	INVOLUNTARY COMMITMENT CASES
3,318	CONTEMPT CASES
6,584	CONFLICT CASES
746	PAROLE REVOCATION CASES
13	OTHER TYPES OF CASES

DPA TRIAL DIVISION FISCAL YEAR 2025 ASSIGNMENTS BY COUNTY

County	Total Cases	Circuit Court	District Court	Family Court
Adair	501	129	372	0
Allen	770	343	407	20
Anderson	407	105	292	10
Ballard	328	158	170	0
Barren	1,176	524	635	17
Bath	377	127	250	0
Bell	1,392	337	1,055	0
Boone	3,180	830	2,315	35
Bourbon	607	201	361	45
Boyd	1,543	522	1,021	0
Boyle	833	302	463	68
Bracken	137	44	93	0
Breathitt	350	96	254	0
Breckinridge	389	160	229	0
Bullitt	1,842	424	1,318	100
Butler	369	242	115	12
Caldwell	367	125	242	0
Calloway	953	383	560	10
Campbell	1,953	539	1,295	119
Carlisle	120	59	61	0
Carroll	509	207	302	0
Carter	839	247	550	42
Casey	494	168	326	0
Christian	5,025	1,228	3,649	148
Clark	1,215	313	892	10
Clay	419	169	250	0
Clinton	301	39	262	0
Crittenden	206	55	148	3
Cumberland	207	59	148	0
Daviess	4,779	1,399	3,316	64

County	Total Cases	Circuit Court	District Court	Family Court
Edmonson	233	135	98	0
Elliott	103	39	59	5
Estill	489	159	330	0
Fayette	7,511	1,289	6,219	3
Fleming	348	139	209	0
Floyd	1,641	523	1,085	33
Franklin	1,095	318	752	25
Fulton	362	166	196	0
Gallatin	547	190	355	2
Garrard	376	97	260	19
Grant	564	196	368	0
Graves	1,254	463	791	0
Grayson	555	219	336	0
Green	186	74	112	0
Greenup	635	233	402	0
Hancock	143	60	79	4
Hardin	3,506	1,072	2,292	142
Harlan	1,794	405	1,389	0
Harrison	467	191	256	20
Hart	534	212	322	0
Henderson	2,077	589	1,385	103
Henry	503	230	261	12
Hickman	100	45	55	0
Hopkins	1,819	641	1,163	15
Jackson	540	106	434	0
Jefferson	21,090	3,176	17,504	410
Jessamine	1,032	239	765	28
Johnson	500	232	262	6
Kenton	4,221	1,486	2,442	293
Knott	409	86	307	16

Note - Numbers above does not include parole or supervised placement cases.

DPA TRIAL DIVISION FISCAL YEAR 2025 ASSIGNMENTS BY COUNTY

County	Total Cases	Circuit Court	District Court	Family Court	County	Total Cases	Circuit Court	District Court	Family Court
Knox	450	114	325	11	Nicholas	198	81	87	30
Larue	432	149	283	0	Ohio	987	421	557	9
Laurel	1,131	264	847	20	Oldham	775	326	447	2
Lawrence	546	207	334	5	Owen	218	103	115	0
Lee	595	184	411	0	Owsley	297	35	262	0
Leslie	342	75	267	0	Pendleton	266	110	147	9
Letcher	799	286	513	0	Perry	1,270	237	1,033	0
Lewis	252	36	208	8	Pike	3,266	745	2,488	33
Lincoln	801	269	515	17	Powell	561	189	372	0
Livingston	257	113	144	0	Pulaski	1,341	440	765	136
Logan	1,116	476	640	0	Robertson	40	19	21	0
Lyon	237	121	116	0	Rockcastle	312	89	222	1
Madison	2,982	711	2,178	93	Rowan	784	245	539	0
Magoffin	240	68	171	1	Russell	607	173	341	93
Marion	460	182	278	0	Scott	1,596	457	1,103	36
Marshall	860	345	507	8	Shelby	1,011	392	562	57
Martin	404	137	257	10	Simpson	721	395	302	24
Mason	737	224	513	0	Spencer	346	113	226	7
McCracken	3,318	1,161	2,004	153	Taylor	957	427	530	0
McCreary	376	185	191	0	Todd	364	131	233	0
McLean	192	70	122	0	Trigg	280	96	184	0
Meade	396	170	226	0	Trimble	219	84	124	11
Menifee	169	55	114	0	Union	429	134	265	30
Mercer	531	174	314	43	Warren	3,349	1,431	1,778	140
Metcalfe	196	96	97	3	Washington	197	62	135	0
Monroe	256	106	150	0	Wayne	667	167	355	145
Montgomery	1,032	392	640	0	Webster	448	123	310	15
Morgan	331	100	216	15	Whitley	836	305	531	0
Muhlenberg	1,094	417	677	0	Wolfe	306	99	206	1
Nelson	1,183	462	721	0	Woodford	266	64	160	42

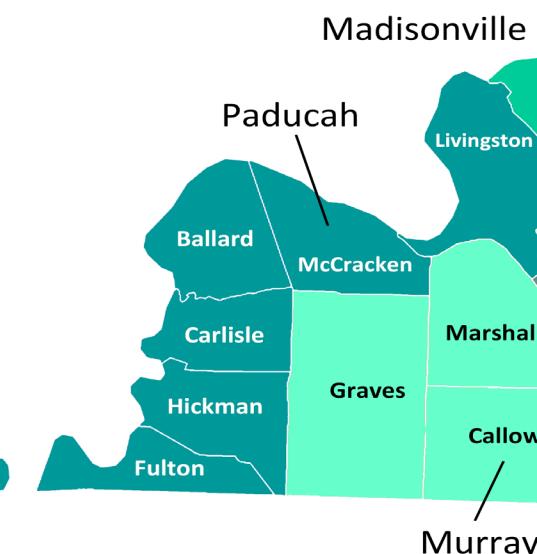
For more information, find us online at www.dpa.ky.gov

DPA PUBLIC DEFENDER OFFICES

BLUEGRA



WESTERN REGION



Henderson

Union

Webster

Crittenden

Madisonville

Paducah

Ballard

McCracken

Hickman

Fulton

Graves

Marshall

Calloway

Murray

Caldwell

Lyon

Trigg

Christian

Hopkins

Owensboro

Daviess

McLean

Muhlenberg

Todd

Logan

Princeton

Hopkinsville

Shepherdsville
(Bullitt Co.)

Elizabethtown

Meade

Breckinridge

Hardin

La

Grayson

Hart

Barren

Allen

Edmonson

Warren

Simpson

Bowling Green

Glasgow

LOUISVILLE REGION

CENTRAL REGION

Henderson

Union

Webster

Hopkins

Muhlenberg

Christian

Todd

Logan

Princeton

Hopkinsville

Owensboro

Daviess

McLean

Ohio

Butler

Edmonson

Warren

Simpson

Bowling Green

Glasgow



James Chamberlain
Western Region Manager
833-254-2468



James Rhorer
Central Region Manager
833-254-2458



Amy Hannah
Louisville Region Manager
833-934-5953



W. Christopher Tracy
Bluegrass Region Manager
859-258-2377



Beth McMahon
Post-Trial Director

POST-TRIAL DIVISION

**TOTAL NEW
POST-TRIAL
CASES
962**

Division Defenders Fighting for Justice Through New Evidence



Whitney Allen of the Kentucky Innocence Project represented a client in an evidentiary hearing on the client's motion for a new trial. Powerful new DNA testing completely excluded the client as the source of DNA found on the victim and at the crime scene. With this evidence, our team is working to ensure that our client's case is reconsidered and that justice is served. Allen was assisted by Paralegal Crystal Knox.



Division Defenders Challenging Issues Before Kentucky Supreme Court



Kit Thurman of the Appeals Branch represented a client on appeal of a lengthy prison sentence. The client was convicted of two counts of first-degree assault, six counts of first-degree wanton endangerment, possession of a handgun by a convicted felon, and first-degree persistent felony offender. The case raised significant issues that impact Kentucky law: denial of a self-defense instruction, a potential non-unanimous verdict, improper testimony, and a conviction despite insufficient evidence. Thurman fought for the client and the law before the Supreme Court to protect and ensure the right to a fair trial in Kentucky.

BREAKDOWN OF REPRESENTATION TYPE

206	APPELLATE BRIEFS FILED
320	NEW POST-CONVICTION APPOINTMENTS
229	NEW JUVENILE POST- DISPOSITION CASES
207	NEW KENTUCKY INNOCENCE PROJECT CASES

CONFLICT & CONTRACT SERVICES DIVISION

Division Defenders Use Teamwork to Secure Justice for Client

After the client had served over four years in custody, his case was finally resolved. Diligent pretrial work of attorneys from the Louisville Office and from the Conflict and Contract Services Division had highlighted the strength of the defense, leading the Commonwealth to concede it could not prove a murder charge. After four years, the charge was dismissed with prejudice and the client received the minimum sentence on a handgun charge. This outcome reflects the dedication, preparation, and commitment of conflict attorneys to ensuring justice is ultimately served, even after significant delays.

Division Defenders Providing Support Through Leadership

In 2025, Conflict and Contract Services Division Attorney Duncan Varda stepped in as Acting Directing Attorney in two DPA offices experiencing leadership vacancies. His guidance and oversight ensured that both offices continued to operate effectively, maintain staff morale, and prioritize client services during periods of transition. With Duncan's support, critical casework and advocacy efforts remained uninterrupted, demonstrating the importance of flexible leadership in sustaining organizational stability and meeting the needs of those we serve.



**TOTAL
CONFLICT
CASES
6,594**

Brad Holajter
Conflict & Contract Services Director

BREAKDOWN OF EXPENDITURES

\$4,383,355	CONFLICT CONTRACTS
\$2,263,710	COURT PLAN CONTRACTS*

*When, due to turnover, a DPA office does not have adequate attorney staffing to represent clients in a specific court, the Division provides support through negotiated Court Plan Contracts with private attorneys.



Court Plan Coverage Attorney Katherine Riley

COSTS OF COURT PLANS IN SELECT OFFICES

PADUCAH
\$248,910

COLUMBIA
\$257,000

HOPKINSVILLE
\$288,500



EDUCATION, STRATEGIC PLANNING, & RECRUITMENT DIVISION

Melanie Foote
Education,
Strategic Planning, &
Recruitment Director



Educational Calendar FY2025

Newly Hired Attorney Training

Aug 19-23: District Court (Group 1)
Sept 9-13 : District Court (Group 2)
Sept 23-27 : District Court (Group 3)
Oct 6-11: Litigation Practice Institute (Group 1)
Oct 21-25: Circuit Court (Group 1)
Oct 28-30: Voir Dire Workshop (Group 1)
Nov 18-22: Defending Children (Group 1)
Feb 12-14: Voir Dire Workshop (Group 2)
Mar 10-14: Circuit Court (Group 1)
Mar 23-28: Litigation Practice Institute (Group 2)
Feb 24-28: Defending Children (Group 2)
April 14-16: Voir Dire Workshop (Group 3)
May 5-9: Circuit Court (Group 2)
May 13-15: Voir Dire Workshop (Group 4)

Advanced Web-Based Learning

Sept 4: Media Authenticity
Sept 18 : Updates on Status Offenses
Oct 16: Preservation in Youth Defender Cases
Nov 6: HB 3 & Conditions
Dec 18: Impact of SB 20 & HB 5
Feb 14: Introduction to Crimmigration
Feb 28: Immigration Webinar

Specialty Position & Role Training

Aug 26-28: ASW Conference
Sept 17-18 : Capital Voir Dire Workshop
Nov 11-15: Core Staff Conference
Dec 9-13: Capital Defense Institute
Jan 22-24 Advanced Youth Defense Summit
April 7-9: Forensics Workshop
April 23-25: Appeals Workshop

Quarterly Leadership

Sept Quarterly Leadership
Dec Quarterly Leadership
March Quarterly Leadership
June Quarterly Leadership

All Agency Celebration & Training

June 2-4: DPA Annual Conference

DPA successfully trained 97 new attorneys from 40 law schools. The Class of 2024 was supported in their offices through direct supervision and peer support. The DPA provided support through 4.5 weeks of Newly Hired Attorney Training that was offered over their first year of practice. Class of 2024 members partnered with an experienced mentor for a year of structured mentorship.

Creative and proactive recruiting for the Class of 2025 included:

- September & October CareerFests in Louisville
- March Online CareerFest
- On-Campus recruiting at 50 law schools
- Online interviews at 14 law schools
- Use of web-based recruiting tools
- Recruiting of former Interns and Externs

Over 60 new lawyers will join DPA in the fall of 2025.

Agency Strategic Planning started in 2024 and continued through 2025, focusing on ways to improve retention throughout the agency.



Newly Hired Attorney District Court Training

LAW OPERATIONS DIVISION

Division Leads Smooth Transition as DPA Welcomes Louisville Office

On July 1, 2024, the Louisville Metro Public Defender's Office officially joined DPA, completing Kentucky's unified statewide public defender system. This accomplishment was the result of months of careful planning and dedication from every branch of the Law Operations Division. The Human Resources Branch welcomed 89 new employees, provided information on state benefits, and personally trained each new employee on state government processes. The Information Technology Branch built a new network, provided updated equipment, and made sure our new colleagues had what they needed to settle in with confidence. The Fiscal Branch handled the transition of property, leases, and contracts to state ownership. The success of the merger reflects not only the preparation behind the scenes, but also the flexibility and resilience of those in the Louisville Office who have quickly become part of DPA.

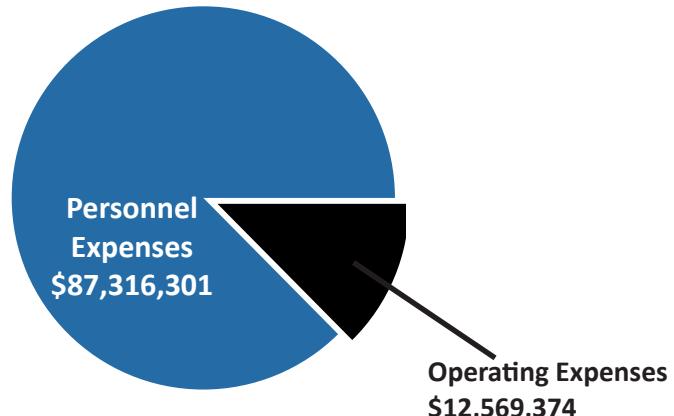


Benefits Fair, hosted by the Human Resources Branch at the 2025 DPA Annual Conference



Terra Harper
Law Operations
Director

EXPENDITURES



DPA FUNDING

\$94,683,300
Defender General Funds

\$4,762,375
Defender Non-General Funds*

\$3,863,369
Protection & Advocacy

*Non-General Funds include funding from federal grant funds, court-ordered client fees, a portion of collected DUI service fees, and a small percentage of collected court costs.

DEFENDER SERVICES BRANCH



Dawn Gasser
Alternative Sentencing
Worker Program
Supervisor

ALTERNATIVE SENTENCING WORKER PROGRAM

Originally facing a \$10,000 cash bond and a 12-year sentence for a trafficking charge, ASW intervention helped a client secure treatment at Grace Recovery instead of incarceration. With judicial approval, the client entered treatment in April 2024 and completed the required six months. The client then chose to remain voluntarily, finding steady work at an automotive business, purchasing a car, and reconnecting with their son. The client's progress led the Commonwealth to reduce its offer from 12 years to just 25 months. The client now plans to stay in the new community, free from negative influences, and continue their sobriety journey. This success story shows how Alternative Sentencing Workers impact legal outcomes for the better while helping clients rebuild stable, productive lives.



DPA Alternative Sentencing Workers



Holly Harrison-Hawkins
Investigative Services
Program Supervisor

INVESTIGATIVE SERVICES PROGRAM

After a retrial of a felony Driving Under the Influence case, the client was found Not Guilty after the DPA defense team methodically dismantled the prosecution's case. A key part of the defense strategy came from the investigator, whose creative work uncovered jail medical records showing the client had normal vitals and was medically cleared, evidence that strongly suggested he was not impaired. The investigator's findings gave the attorneys powerful material for trial. Combined with testimony from the client's mother, photographic evidence, and an expert witness who exposed flaws in the police investigation, the defense team presented a convincing case that the client was not guilty of DUI. Thanks to this collaborative effort, the jury acquitted the client after only a half hour of deliberation.



DPA Public Advocate Investigators

PROTECTION & ADVOCACY DIVISION

Division Defenders Help Client Gain Independence through Advocacy

Kentucky Protection and Advocacy (P&A) first met Amy in 2018 while monitoring an adult day treatment program. Despite being a participant, she was assisting others like a staff member.

Amy became a paraplegic after a 2002 car accident that led to multiple surgeries, an amputation, and later, a bladder cancer diagnosis. Isolated and depressed, she attempted suicide in 2016. With encouragement, she began attending day treatment and gradually rebuilt her confidence.

P&A connected Amy with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) to pursue employment. In 2019, she was hired by a local school system as an After School Aide. With P&A's support, she passed her paraeducator certification exam and advanced her career.

Transportation barriers soon threatened her independence, but with P&A's help, Amy learned to drive, purchased a van with her own savings, and secured modifications to make it accessible. Later, when OVR demanded repayment of \$10,000 for van modifications after a car accident, P&A successfully appealed the decision, allowing Amy to purchase a new van and continue working.

Amy now thrives in her job and says, "Your agency gave me my independence back and helped me achieve my dreams and become a working member of society."



**TOTAL
CLIENTS
SERVED**

3,311



Jeff Edwards
Protection & Advocacy
Director

Amy was served through the PAIMI and CAP programs. Unfortunately, the proposed 2026 federal budget reduces PAIMI funding from \$473,700 to \$167,500, and eliminates CAP, PAIR, and PAVA entirely—cuts totaling more than \$830,000. These reductions threaten critical services for Kentuckians with disabilities across the lifespan.



DPA TRIAL DIVISION CASELOAD REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2025

Office	Funded Attorney Positions	Funded Caseload	New Cases Assigned to Office	Circuit Cases	District Cases	Other Cases
Bell County	5	251.6	1,375	293	961	121
Boone County	13	368.4	5,035	1,407	3,082	546
Bowling Green	14	432.4	6,559	2,684	3,078	796
Boyd County	10	366.3	3,821	1,179	2,409	233
Bullitt County	8	365.5	3,158	847	1,930	381
Columbia	9	319.8	2,992	1,051	1,796	145
Covington	11	355.0	4,224	1,336	1,927	961
Cynthiana	4	219.5	961	347	473	141
Danville	5	377.6	2,138	616	1,149	373
Elizabethtown	14	340.6	5,108	1,567	2,985	556
Frankfort	4	248.0	1,073	265	693	115
Georgetown	6	403.8	2,488	678	1,579	231
Glasgow	7	291.1	2,190	854	1,130	206
Harlan	4	435.0	1,794	376	1,181	237
Hazard	9	264.9	2,457	570	1,453	434
Henderson	7	411.4	3,167	801	1,901	465
Hopkinsville	11	470.7	5,395	1,244	2,884	1267
LaGrange	5	285.0	1,505	602	783	122
Lexington	24	302.2	7,340	1,243	5,621	476
London	11	266.6	3,163	839	1,985	338
Louisville	65	325.7	21,255	3,149	16,780	1329
Madisonville	8	357.9	3,120	1,004	1,810	306
Maysville	4	250.8	1,090	333	659	98
Morehead	9	294.8	2,795	881	1,725	189
Murray	9	317.3	3,056	1,076	1,747	233
Newport	6	334.3	2,101	556	1,236	309
Nicholasville	5	321.0	1,646	322	1,212	112
Owensboro	12	464.7	5,828	1,710	3,734	384
Paducah	10	415.3	4,534	1,516	2,418	600
Pikeville	7	423.4	3,266	655	2,267	344
Prestonsburg	8	335.1	2,788	890	1,547	351
Princeton	4	204.3	875	314	503	58
Richmond	12	372.0	4,737	1,026	3,272	439
Shelbyville	5	323.0	1,758	540	987	231
Somerset	10	303.1	3,228	942	1,709	577
Stanton	8	288.5	2,580	642	1,617	321
DPA Total	363	341.6	130,600	34,355	82,223	14,025