



Caseload Highlights of the Unified Judicial System of Pennsylvania

June 3, 2020

Department of Research & Statistics

Caseload Highlights Definitions and Notes

This report is intended to provide timely information about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on court caseloads. Caseload figures are those reported by the judicial districts and have not been verified. Accordingly, they are preliminary and subject to change. This report will be issued monthly, and expand to include dispositions and pending inventory figures. Please contact Kim Nieves, AOPC Director of Research & Statistics at kim.nieves@pacourts.us with any questions about this report.

- Monthly caseload statistics reports are due to AOPC from the judicial districts on the 15th of the following month; May 2020 reports are due June 15th and this report will be updated.
- **Baseline** is the average number of filings in that month for the past three years
- **Month to month percent change** is the difference between the baseline compared to the same month in 2020.
- Year to date, or **YTD percent change** is the difference between the cumulative baseline compared to the total number of cases filed so far in 2020.
- **Missing** is the percent of cases not yet reported by the judicial districts; it's calculated as the average percent of the statewide total that a non-reporting district contributes. Data from CPCMS and MDJS systems (criminal, dependency, delinquency & MDJ courts) are extracted from the systems in real time, so there are no missing cases, though there may be docketing delays that will increase figures in later Highlights report versions.

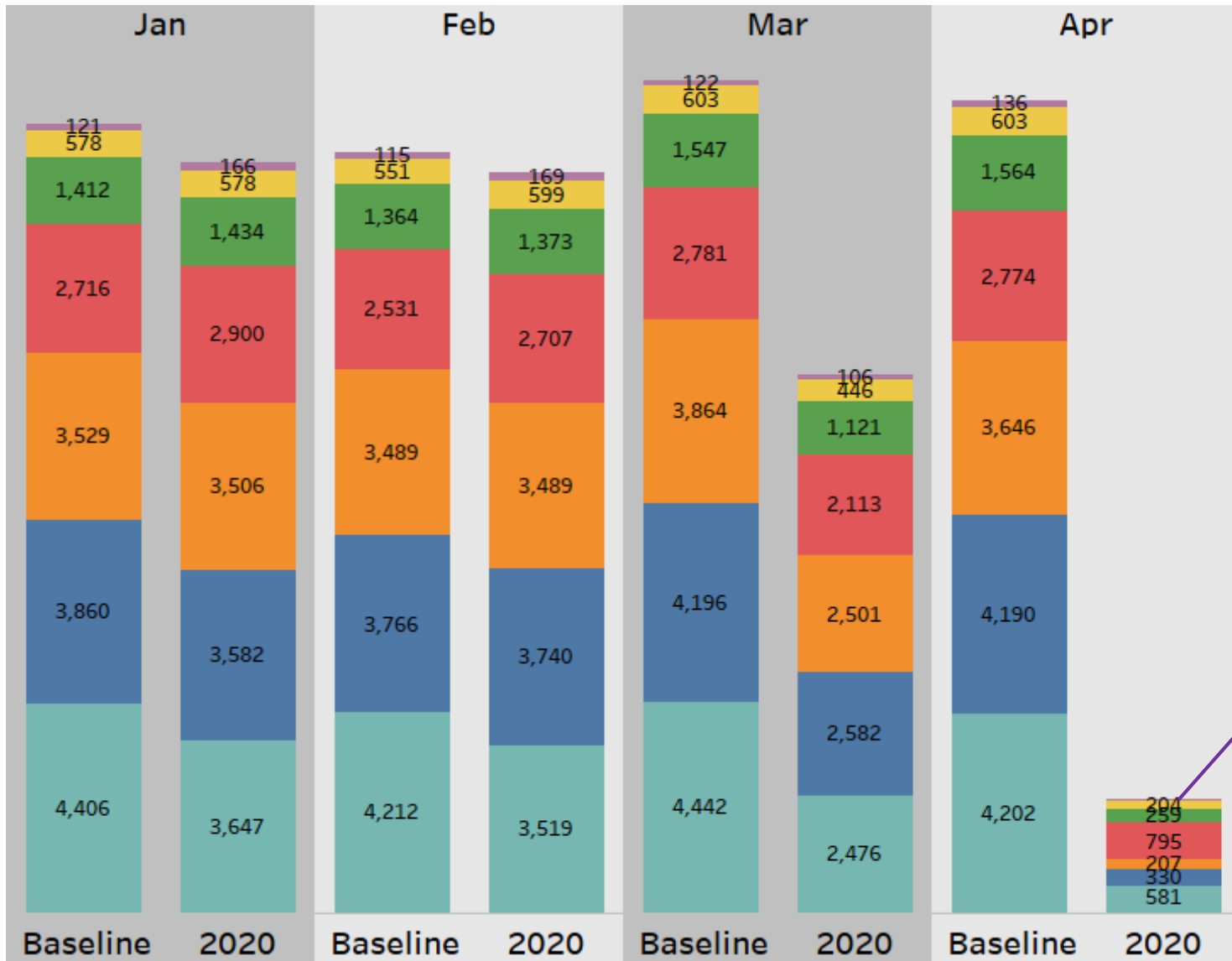
Common Pleas Criminal

PA State Police statistics show total “Calls for Service” were up by **80%** in late April compared to a “Pre-COVID-19 Baseline” week in late February. At the same time, **Total Arrests fell 76%, and Total Criminal Offenses and Total Property Crimes each decreased by 87%.**

(Source: PA State Police COVID-19 Statistics (<http://www.psp.pa.gov>; and *The Morning Call*, 4/23/2020).

For “Non-Emergency Incidents”, the PA State Police have limited on-scene responses to select incidents such as lost/found items, littering, identity theft, and general requests to speak to a trooper).

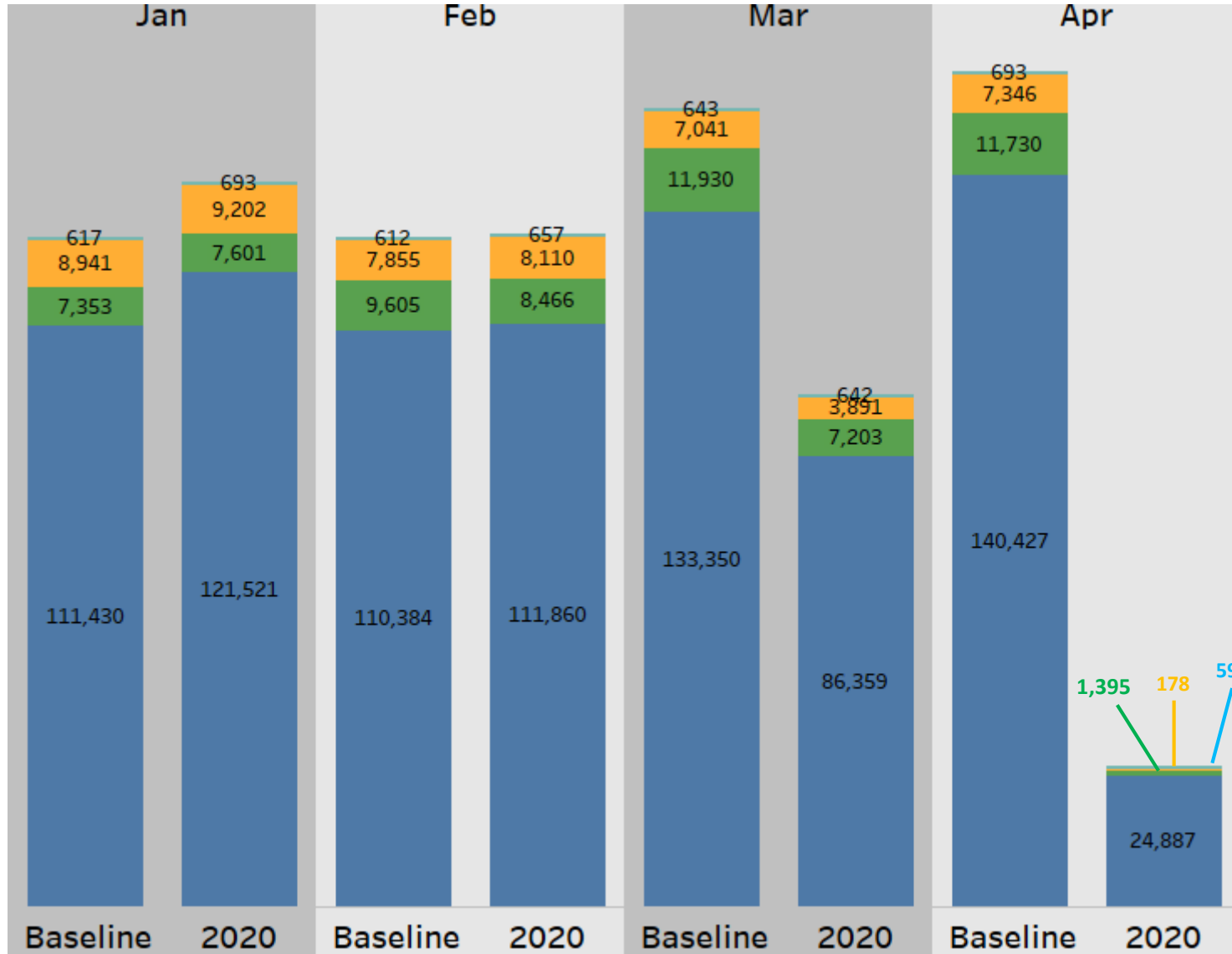
(Source: PA State Police press release, 4/1/2020).



Percent change

Case type	Apr base- Apr 20	YTD
Motor Vehicle	-86%	-6 %
Weapon	-67%	-22%
Public Order	-84%	-29%
Person	-71%	-21%
DUI	-94%	-33%
Drug	-92%	-36%
Property	-86%	-41%

MDJ and Philadelphia Municipal Courts



Case type	Percent change	
	Apr base- Apr 20	YTD
Emergency PFA	-15%	-1%
Landlord/Tenant	-97%	-31%
Civil	-88%	-39%
Traffic	-82%	-30%

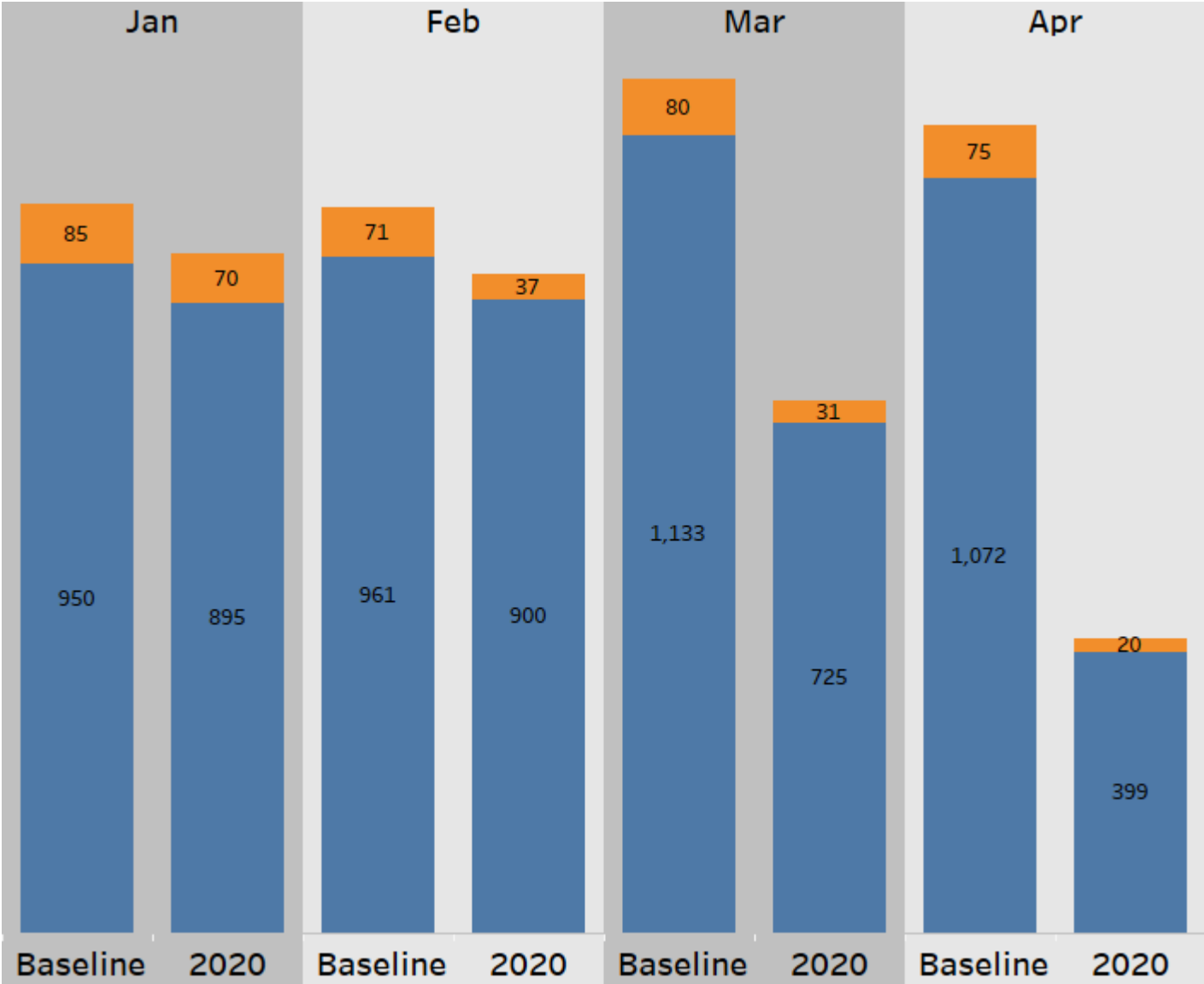
Emergency PFAs fell only moderately. Filings increased in 16 counties in April 2020 vs. Baseline.

PA State Police reported decreased traffic on the Pennsylvania Turnpike in April (-76.5% non-commercial traffic /-27.5% commercial traffic) as the statewide stay-at-home order took effect. Source: Patriot-News, 4/7/2020

March 18: Supreme Court suspends residential evictions/ejectments.

Philadelphia Municipal Court (PhMC) monthly figures are based on ESTIMATES because PhMC reports its data in a single, year-end sum. PhMC will begin reporting monthly, and will be depicted in its own page in upcoming editions.

Juvenile Dependency



Percent change

Case type	Apr base- Apr 20	YTD
Status Offense	-73%	-49%
Abuse/ Neglect	-63%	-46%

Dependency hearings deemed **critical functions** during judicial emergency.

Statewide, **calls to ChildLine (PA Dept. of Human Services) fell by 50%** in April 2020 compared to April 2019. Closure of in-person K-12 instruction, day care, organized sports and religious services limited access of mandated reporters to children.

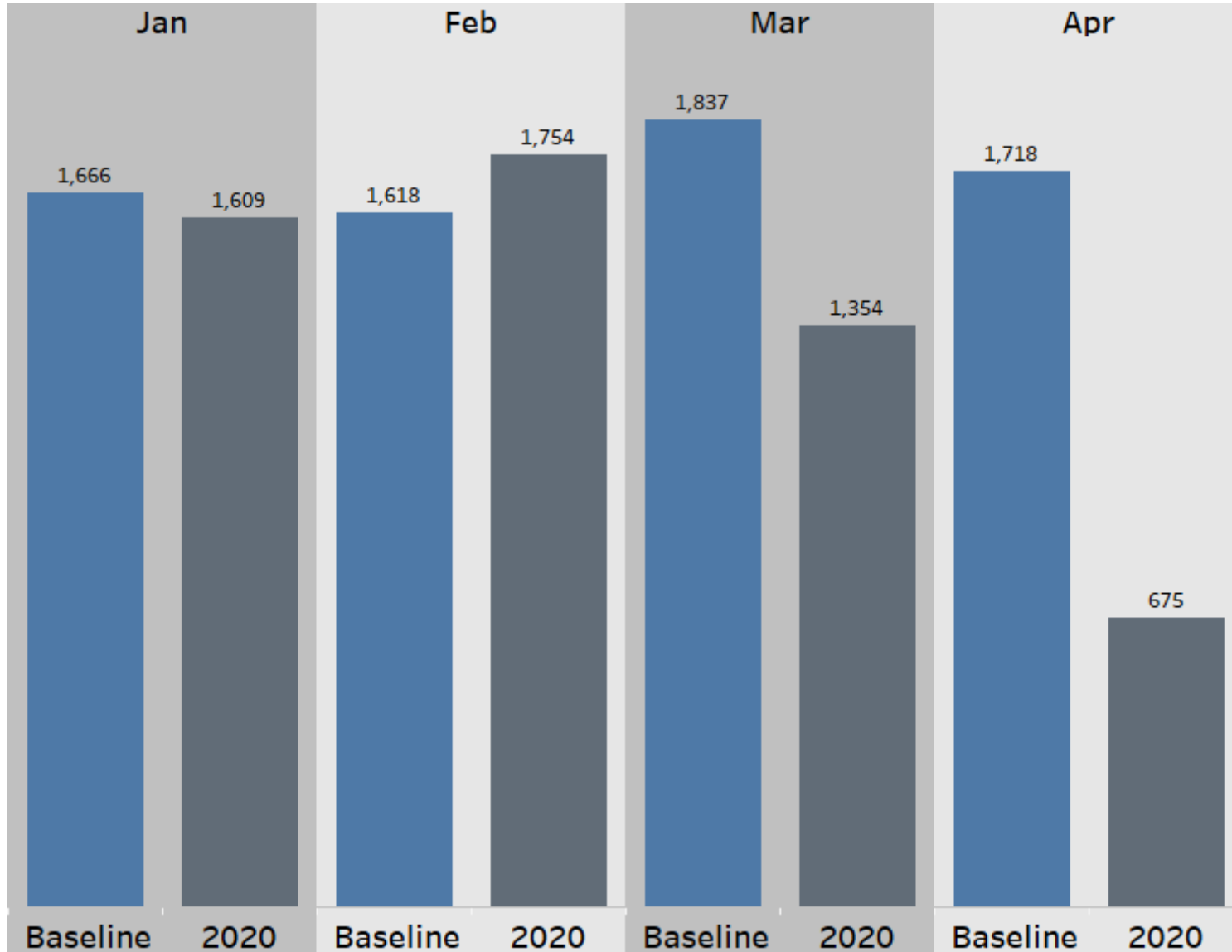
(Sources: Patriot-News, 4/17/2020; Philadelphia Inquirer, 5/22/2020).

PA pediatricians and child protection advocates report an increased number of abused children requiring hospitalization.

(Source; York Daily Record, 5/11/2020)

Closure of K-12 in-classroom instruction contributes to fewer status offenses (e.g., truancy).

Juvenile Delinquency



Case type	Percent change	
	Apr base- Apr 20	YTD
Delinquency	-60%	-21%

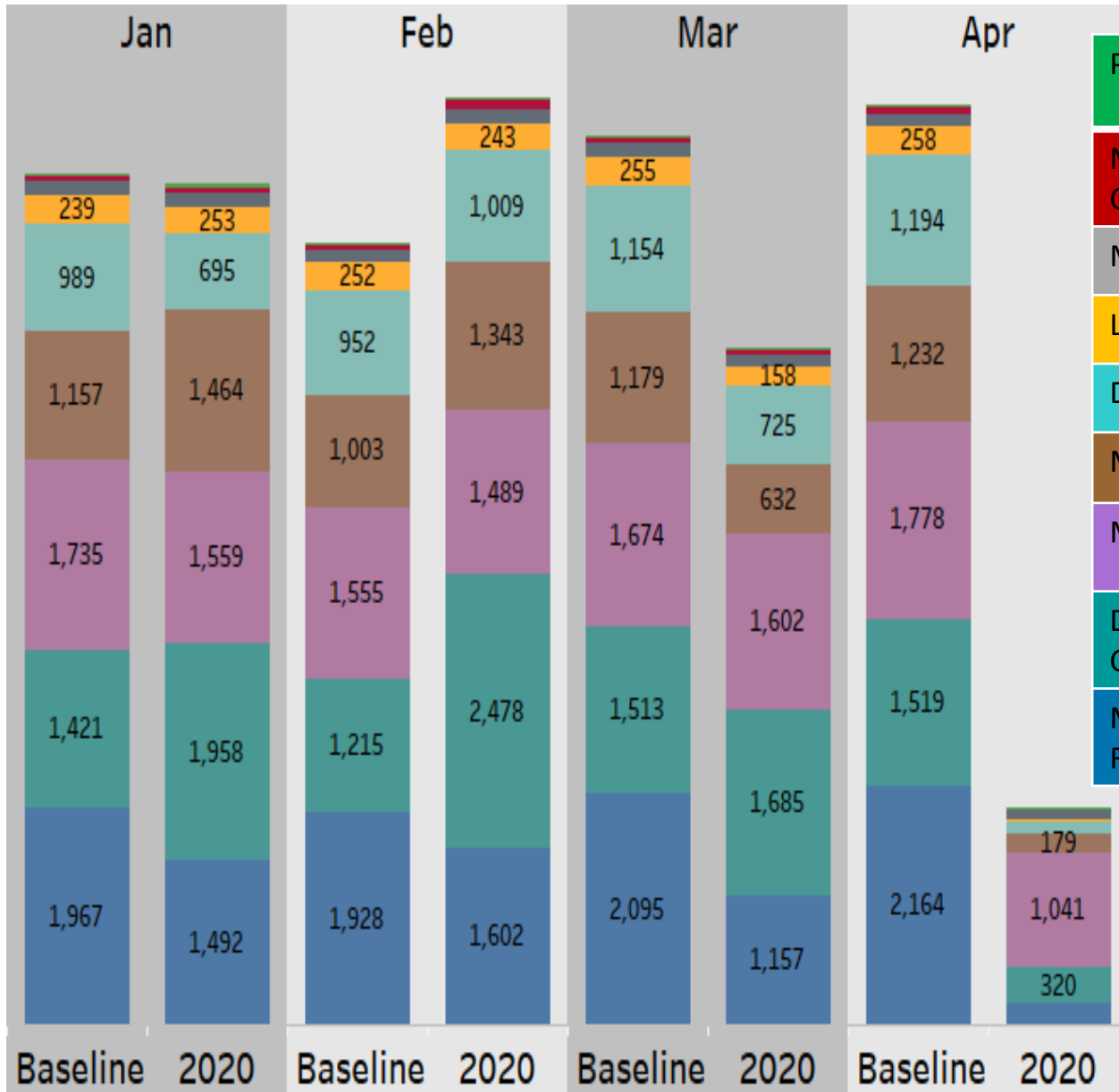
49% of probation departments reported that **no intakes were occurring** as of March 2020.

(Source: Juvenile Court Judges' Commission, March 2020 survey of 41 county juvenile probation departments).

27% of probation departments **furloughed at least some staff**.

(Source: Juvenile Court Judges' Commission, April 2020 survey of 56 county juvenile probation departments).

Common Pleas Civil

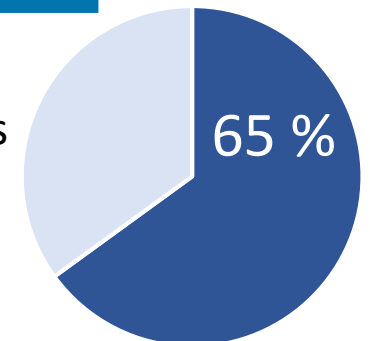


Percent change

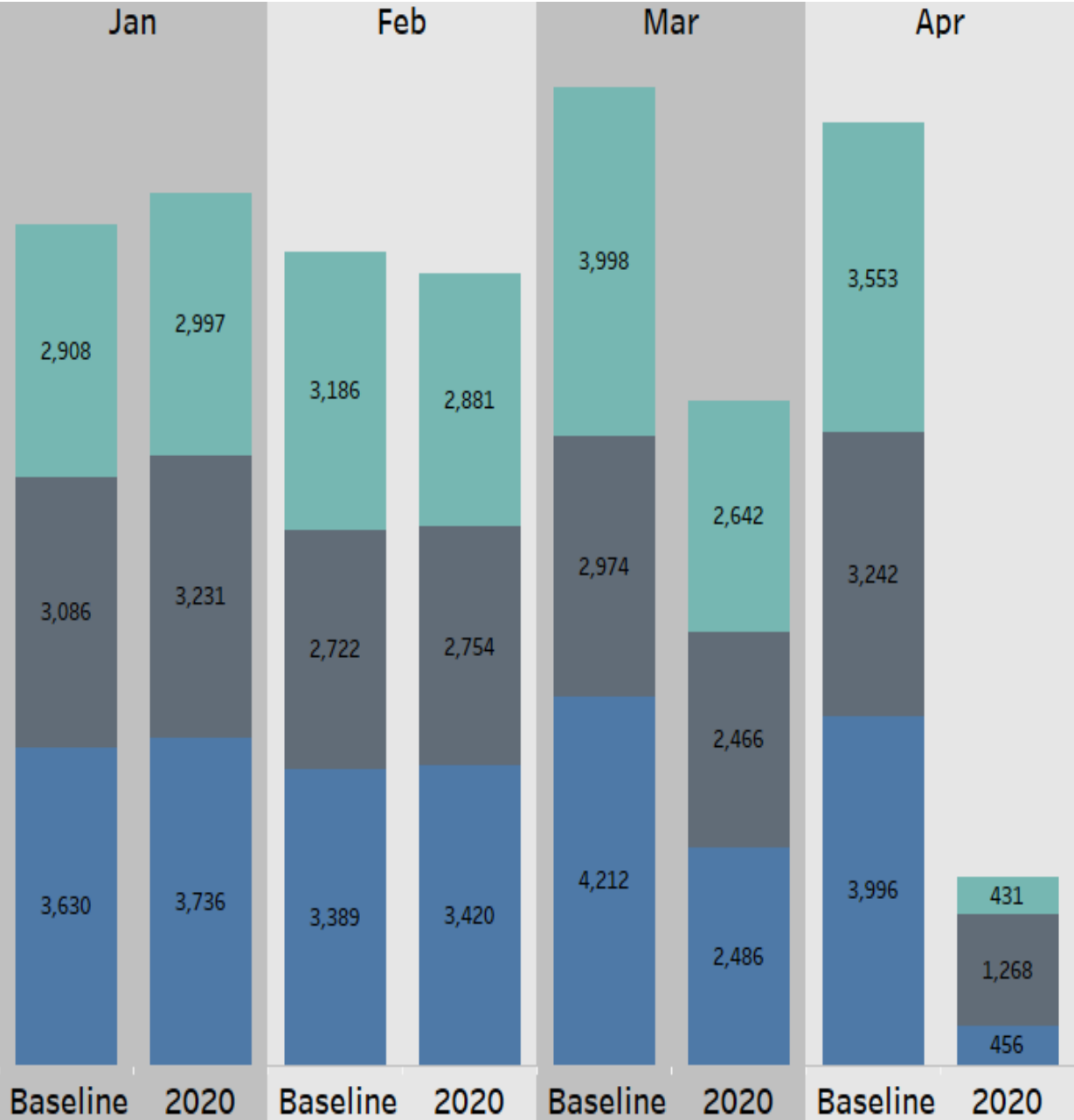
Case type	Apr base- Apr 20	YTD	Missing
Prof Liability-Other	-33 %	-6%	31%
Mortgage Foreclosure Commercial	-67%	0%	28%
Medical Malpractice	-24%	2%	29%
Landlord Tenant	-94%	-33%	36%
Debt Collection Other	-91%	-41%	31%
Miscellaneous	-85%	-21%	8%
Motor Vehicle Tort	-41%	-16%	32%
Debt Collection Credit Card	-78%	14%	29%
Mortgage Foreclosure Residential	-91%	-45%	29%

The **Miscellaneous case category** includes Mandamus, Quo Warranto, Replevin, Declaratory Judgments and other civil filings not separately tracked by the Statewide Civil Cover Sheet.

Only selected civil case types are included reflecting 65% of the state's civil inventory.



Common Pleas Family Court



Percent change

Case type	Apr base- Apr 20	YTD	Missing
Divorce	-88%	-34%	35%
PFA	-60%	-19%	25%
Custody	-88%	-34%	22%

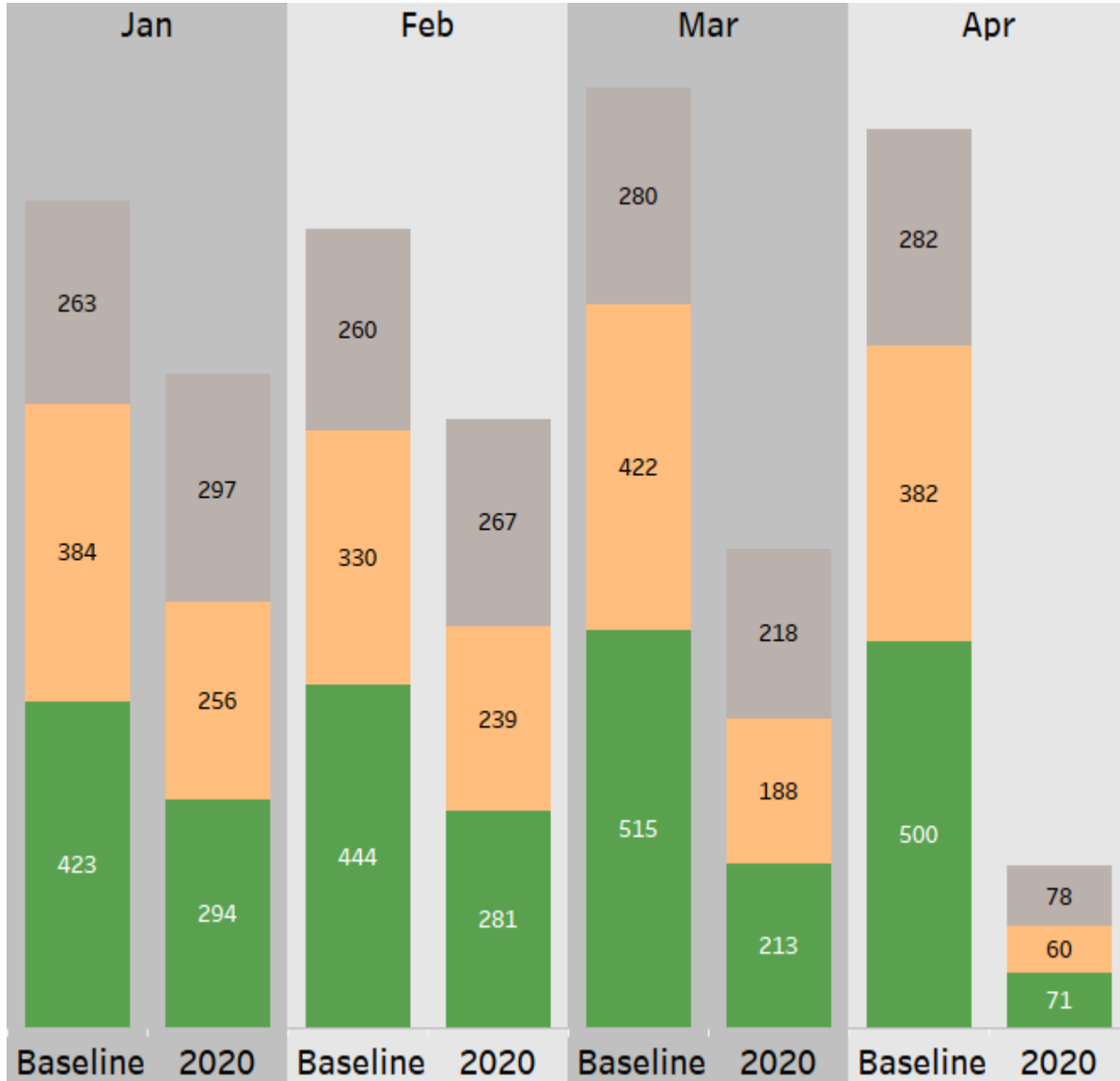
Philadelphia domestic violence hotline records 30% higher call volumes in first week after stay-at-home order issued ([Source: Philadelphia Tribune, 4/6/2020](#)).

Some counties institute rotation of standby judges to handle PFA hearings; concerns raised that many individuals are unaware that PFA hearings remain a critical function ([Source: Philadelphia Inquirer, 4/6/2020](#)).

Many Prothonotaries accept filings via email, e-filing, U.S. mail, or a dedicated drop box

As counties report their caseload statistics to AOPC, many advise of docketing delays due to staff furloughs

Common Pleas Orphans' Court



Percent change

Case type	Apr base- Apr 20	YTD	Missing
Guardianships	-72%	-21%	29%
Adoptions	-84%	-51%	26%
Relinquishments/ Terminations	-86%	-54%	24%

As counties report their caseload statistics to AOPC, many advise of docketing delays due to staff furloughs

Counties also advise that county Children and Youth Services (CYS) staff furloughs may result in fewer Relinquishment/Termination filings

In many counties, Register of Wills/Clerk of Orphans' Court accept filings via email, U.S. mail, or dedicated drop box

COMMON PLEAS CIVIL:

18 counties have yet to submit their Civil Court Report for April 2020.

- These counties account for 31% of the total of Civil filings per year.
 - ✓ Of note, counties missing from the accounting above include Allegheny (accounts for 11% of the state total), Delaware (accounts for 5% of the state total), and Lehigh (accounts for 3% of the state total).

COMMON PLEAS FAMILY:

- Custody & Divorce: for April, 21 counties have not yet reported data (as of 6/1/20).
- For Custody, these 21 counties account for 22% of the Custody filings annually.
 - ✓ Of note, counties yet to submit include Allegheny (8% of the annual total), Luzerne (4% of the annual total), and Delaware and Northumberland, both accounting for 2% of the annual total.
- For Divorce cases, the 21 counties that have not yet filed account for 35% of the total annual filings.
 - ✓ Of note, missing counties include Potter County, that accounts for 17% of the annual filings, Allegheny County (7% of total annual filings), and Delaware County (3% of total annual filings).
- PFA: 17 counties have not yet reported for April, as of 6/1/2020.
 - ✓ these counties account for 25% of the state total based on the three year average (baseline figure).
 - ✓ Of note, counties that have not submitted include Allegheny County (9% of the annual total), Delaware County (5% of the annual total), and Luzerne County (4% of the annual total).

COMMON PLEAS ORPHANS' COURT:

- 18 counties have yet to submit data for April. These 18 counties account for 26% of the annual total of Adoption filings, 24% of the annual total of Relinquishment/Termination filings, and 29% of the total annual total of Guardianship filings. Of note:
- Adoptions: these 18 counties account for 24% of the annual total filings.
 - ✓ Of note, missing counties include Allegheny County (6%), Luzerne (3%), Mercer (3%) and Westmoreland County (2%) of total annual filings.
- Relinquishments/Terminations: these 18 counties account for 29% of the total annual filings.
 - ✓ Of note, missing counties include Allegheny County (6%), Westmoreland (4%), Luzerne (3%), and Northumberland (2%).
- Guardianship: the missing reports account for 29% of the total annual guardianship filings.
 - ✓ Of note, missing counties include Allegheny County (9%), and Lehigh, Luzerne, Northampton, and Westmoreland each accounting for 3% of the total annual filings.