

CHILD VICTIMS PROJECT

*Model Courts
Status Report*

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF
JUVENILE AND
FAMILY COURT JUDGES
PERMANENCY PLANNING
FOR CHILDREN PROJECT



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Office of Justice Programs

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

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August 1997

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Contents

I.	BACKGROUND — National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges	4
II.	INTRODUCTION — Child Victims Model Courts Project	7
III.	COURT PROFILES	
	A. Alexandria, Virginia	12
	B. Chicago, Illinois	16
	C. Cincinnati, Ohio	20
	D. El Paso, Texas	25
	E. Miami, Florida	28
	F. Nashville, Tennessee	31
	G. Newark, New Jersey	34
	H. Reno, Nevada	38
	I. Salt Lake City, Utah	42
	J. Tucson, Arizona	47
IV.	CONCLUSION	51
V.	PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENTS	55
VI.	CURRENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND GOALS OF CHILD VICTIMS PROJECT MODEL COURTS	61

Background

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT JUDGES PERMANENCY PLANNING FOR CHILDREN PROJECT

Over the past two decades, child abuse and neglect in the United States have continued to attract attention and to prompt concern over their long-term impact on our nation's children. Despite concerted social and governmental responses, the problems of child abuse and neglect remain of great concern today.

Federal support was first made available for the investigation and prevention of child maltreatment more than 23 years ago with the passage in 1974 of the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act. At that time, increased public attention was being focused on government handling of abused and neglected children. Congressional proponents of child abuse prevention noted that children removed from their homes for reason of abuse or neglect were being placed in foster homes, group homes, and institutions which too often continued

the cycle of maltreatment. Too many children lingered in what were intended to be temporary, short-term placements because no permanency planning for their futures was being undertaken.

By 1980, over 302,000 children were living in out-of-home, temporary care. This number continued to increase throughout the 1980s until foster care population estimates reached nearly 500,000 children in 1990. Many children had endured years of multiple foster care placements without permanent resolution of their dilemmas. Many were caught in "foster care drift," growing up without families and without healthy emotional or psychological permanency. These children initially victimized by abuse or neglect were again being victimized - this time by government systems.

Many abused or neglected children needed the protection of out-of-home care. Yet research indicated that some children were being sheltered in substitute care simply because family support and rehabilita-

tive resources were neither feasible nor available. Some children drifting among temporary placements had little contact with social service personnel or family members, and failed to receive any services to either reunify their families or to secure new adoptive families.

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

Permanency Planning for Children Project

In response to these continuing problems, Congress in 1980 passed the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (P.L. 96-272). The same year, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) established its Permanency Planning for Children Project. NCJFCJ members throughout the nation recognized the critical role judges could play in improving oversight and handling of child abuse and neglect cases.

The new federal law mandated strict judicial oversight and improved government response to abused and neglected children. New federal mandates also applied to state social service agencies. Compliance with the new mandates was encouraged by fiscal incentives and tied to federal funding of state foster care budgets. Social service agencies were required to make “reasonable efforts” to prevent the

unnecessary out-of-home placement of children, to safely reunite children with their biological families whenever possible, and to find adoptive homes for all children whose families could not safely be reunited. These “reasonable efforts” were to be examined and evaluated, and a judicial determination entered into the record which described the quality, timeliness and appropriateness of services. This judicial determination was now required in each case in order to continue federal contributions to the state’s cost of foster care.

Prior to the new law in 1980, juvenile and family court judges had been expected only to determine whether a child had been abused or neglected and, if so, whether the child needed to be removed from the home or placed under court or agency supervision. Judges now, however, are required to regularly review the case of every abused or neglected child until each is provided with a safe, permanent, and stable home. Many judges and state court systems have neither the ability nor the resources to meet these legislative demands. Judicial case-loads continue to increase at the same time the number of issues, hearings, and parties add to the complexities of abuse and neglect litigation. As a result in many jurisdictions, the quality of the court process has suffered.

The NCJFCJ's Permanency Planning for Children Project, in its recognition of the need for judicial leadership and collaboration, has addressed systemic improvements through a number of activities:

- Child Victims Model Courts Initiative - As described in detail in this document, the Permanency Planning for Children Project is working with 10 model courts nationwide to improve court practice in child abuse and neglect cases. This effort also provides training and technical assistance to observer courts and to court improvement programs in 48 states which are focusing on systemic change in the handling of dependency cases. A cornerstone of training and technical assistance under this initiative is the National Council's publication, *RESOURCE GUIDELINES: Improving Court Practice in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases*. Support for this effort is provided by the U. S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Diversion Model Courts Initiative - This initiative, funded by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, is being implemented in four model courts which are developing programs to safely divert appropriate families from child protective services into community-based services. Model diversion courts have developed and expanded programs utilizing family group conferencing, mediation, and court/community collaboration, and are serving as examples to other courts through training and provision of technical assistance.
- Expedited Adoption Initiative - Jointly funded by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption and the American Honda Foundation, this two-year initiative is examining termination of parental rights and adoption practice in two model courts. An Advisory Committee of national experts has been identified to develop a best practice manual for use by courts nationwide to assess and improve adoption practice through systems change and community outreach.
- Permanent Families Training and Technical Assistance Initiative - This continuing multi-year effort is funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the U. S. Department of Justice, and supports permanency planning training and technical assistance for courts nationwide. As a result of this effort, the project is able to provide faculty and training materials to many annual local, state and national judicial and interdisciplinary training programs.

Introduction

Child Victims Model Courts Project

FEDERAL SUPPORT for training and technical assistance to improve court handling of child abuse and neglect cases was awarded five years ago by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the U.S. Department of Justice for the initiative, "Improving the Juvenile and Family Courts' Handling of Child Abuse and Neglect Cases: A Model Training and Technical Assistance Program Development Project." This effort has come to be familiarly known as the Child Victims Model Courts Project.

The initial focus of the Child Victims Model Courts Project was to establish a committee of judges and national experts to develop a useful, step-by-step document to help juvenile and family court judges carefully examine and improve court handling of child abuse and neglect cases. The book entitled,

RESOURCE GUIDELINES: Improving Court Practice in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases, was developed by judges, court administrators, child welfare experts, and others over a period of three years. Upon its completion in August 1995, the *RESOURCE GUIDELINES* document was endorsed by the American Bar Association and the Conference of Chief Justices.

The *GUIDELINES* identify key aspects of careful, complete and fundamentally fair hearings at all stages of court proceedings. Since the *GUIDELINES*' initial publication, the book has been circulated nationwide. To date, more than 12,000 copies have been distributed at state and national training programs, at each Model Court meeting and training seminar, to state court improvement programs in 48 states, and in response to requests from individual system professionals.

Model Courts and state court

improvement programs across the nation now are using the *GUIDELINES* as a blueprint for change. Detailed descriptions of work in 10 Model Courts are provided in the "Profiles" section of this report. The *GUIDELINES* continue to serve as a basic road map toward court improvements in the handling of child abuse and neglect cases.

The first Model Court to help refine and implement the *GUIDELINES* was the Hamilton County Juvenile Court in Cincinnati, Ohio. This court of juvenile and family jurisdiction continues to serve as a demonstration site for additional courts engaged in making systemic improvements in child abuse and neglect hearings. Nine additional courts are using the example of the Cincinnati court and are selecting methods from the menu of options in the *GUIDELINES* to improve their court operations. NCJFCJ staff working on the Child Victims Project provide training and technical assistance to each of the 10 Model Court sites. For some Model Courts, the *GUIDELINES* represent future, aspirational goals because these courts cannot realistically be transformed overnight. Yet the goal-setting process which each court has undergone to identify needed improvements serves as a useful model for all

juvenile and family court systems.

In 1996, Hawaii's juvenile court system was designated an "Observer Court." It is anticipated that in coming years, several additional Observer Courts will be identified to participate in the Child Victims Project. Observer Courts will include those which already have begun court improvement efforts independently and which have requested additional resources available through the Child Victims Project, including judicial and multidisciplinary training and technical assistance.

Each Model and Observer Court has at its disposal an expert Child Victims Project staff comprised of permanency planning experts, attorneys, conference organizers, writers, management information system specialists and support personnel. These professionals provide continuing training and technical assistance to all Model and Observer Courts. Project staff members help courts identify barriers to permanency, improve coordination and collaboration among system professionals, and develop and achieve both short and long-term goals.

Staff assistance is provided to Model Courts through written research, practical information and on-site technical assistance. Model Court representatives exchange ideas and expertise through

research, written materials, and cross-site visits. Inter-court study visits and information exchange allow participants to identify innovative court procedures best suited to a particular jurisdiction. Through this federally supported effort,

project staff also are able to provide training and technical assistance to state court improvement programs, to local jurisdiction-based training activities, and to nationally-focused training conferences.

Child Victims Project

COURT**LEAD JUDGE**

Alexandria, Virginia

Judge Stephen W. Rideout
Chief Judge

Chicago, Illinois

Judge Nancy S. Salyers
Presiding Judge
Child Protection Division

Cincinnati, Ohio

Judge David E. Grossmann
Presiding Administrative Judge

El Paso, Texas

Judge Patricia A. Macias
Associate Judge

Miami, Florida

Judge D. Bruce Levy
Administrative Judge

Nashville, Tennessee

Judge Andrew J. Shookhoff
Juvenile Court Judge

Newark, New Jersey

Judge Joseph C. Cassini, III
Superior Court Judge

Reno, Nevada

Judge Charles M. McGee
Second Judicial District Court
Department Two

Salt Lake City, Utah

Judge Sharon P. McCully
Juvenile Court Judge

Tucson, Arizona

Judge Nanette M. Warner
Associate Presiding Judge
Superior Court of the State of Arizona

Model Courts

ADDRESS

Alexandria Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court
520 King Street, First Floor
Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3160

Circuit Court of Cook County
2245 W. Ogden Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60612

Hamilton County Juvenile Court
800 Broadway, 14th Floor
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

65th Judicial District Court
500 E. San Antonio Street, Room 1104
El Paso, Texas 79901

11th Judicial Circuit Court
3300 N.W. 27th Avenue, Suite #212
Miami, Florida 33142

Juvenile Court of Davidson County
100 Woodland Street
Nashville, Tennessee 37213

Superior Court of New Jersey, Family Division
212 Washington Street, 10th Floor
Newark, New Jersey 07102

Washoe County Courthouse
75 Court Street
Reno, Nevada 89501

Third District Juvenile Court
3522 South, 700 West
Salt Lake City, Utah 84119

Pima County Juvenile Court
2225 E. Ajo Way
Tucson, Arizona 85713-6295

Observer Court

HONOLULU, HAWAII

Judge Michael A. Town
Family Court of Hawaii
First Circuit

777 Punchbowl Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Alexandria Virginia

Model Court: Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court

Lead Judge: Stephen W. Rideout, Chief Judge

Area served: City of Alexandria

Estimated population: 112,000

Juvenile population: 17,000

Children in out-of-home placement: 145

Agency: State system with local units

Judges hearing dependency matters: 2

Cases assigned: By prior family involvement; otherwise, randomly

GAL: Appointed in all cases

CASA Program: Active program provides training for GAL attorneys

Attorneys, social service agency officials, court and office personnel gather for a meeting

Snapshot

called by the judges. Some wonder aloud how their already good case processing system can be improved. Concern is voiced over whether additional workloads will mean

additional resources. Before calling the meeting, the Lead Judge had contacted all participants to explain the Model Court Project and to seek ideas on how even better, more timely results could be obtained for children and families. Discussion is invited on a single issue: "How can we do better?" The ensuing interdisciplinary debate identifies unnecessarily long, daily waiting periods prior to dependency hearings. Judge participants agree to set aside specific calendar time to hear dependency cases. They also agree to suspend other hearings at that set-aside time in order to avoid any delay. Concern is voiced about the cumbersome process of guardian ad litem (GAL) appointments and confusion about GAL duties. Language is proposed to provide continuous GAL appointment from the initial hearing through termination of the case, with specific language describing all GAL obligations. A representative of the office of the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) agrees to provide GAL training and to make continuing legal education credits available. Additional data on potential court improvements is presented and shared among participants. At meeting's end, participants' initial concerns have been

dispelled. The now enthusiastic group of participants settles on a date and time for their next multidisciplinary exchange. ■

COURT and social service agency officials working in the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court in Alexandria, Va., quickly perceived a true need for multidisciplinary cooperation to improve court practice in child abuse and neglect cases. Lead Judge Stephen Rideout began systemic change efforts by inviting representatives of key professions involved in the dependency process—social service personnel, attorneys, guardians ad litem, representatives of the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program, and court personnel—to discuss their perceptions of the court process and how to improve it.

Changes are now being instituted with full interdisciplinary agreement. Following a series of meetings early in 1996, representatives from Alexandria visited the Demonstration Site in Cincinnati, examined Virginia's state and local court management information systems, and worked on a set of recommendations to the State Court Administrator to improve case tracking of child abuse



The value of the Child Victims Model Courts Project is that it allows us to take an occasional step back from the day-to-day processing of these cases and to conceptualize how we might do them better. We do this with the other players in the process which likewise allows them to conceptualize how they can improve their process and how we all can make it work more effectively in obtaining safe permanency and protection for children in the shortest possible time.

—JUDGE STEPHEN RIDEOUT

and neglect cases throughout the state. The court also planned and implemented training for each of its volunteer CASAs on how to improve advocacy efforts in child abuse and neglect cases.

Regular, interdisciplinary meetings continue. Lead Judge Rideout periodically sends letters, articles, and suggestions to all court improvement participants so that everyone is working with the same information. All changes already made, and future improvements, are designed without increase in either personnel or programs. Court achievements instead are being made with available resources through improved collaboration and communication among various agencies and parties.

A primary accomplishment has been

improved GAL representation for children. A GAL is now appointed for the life of each case. Immediately after a case is first filed, a GAL is appointed from a pool of qualified, trained attorneys. The GAL is required to attend multidisciplinary staffings and to submit court reports at least every six months; specific duties of representation are set forth in the final removal order or final protective order.

Another preliminary improvement has been the establishment of a one-family/one-judge system in Alexandria. Judges now familiarize themselves with cases and reports from the guardian ad litem (GAL), the CASA, and the social services caseworker prior to the hearings on each case. In the past, if the parents failed to appear for a preliminary hearing,

they were given notice of an additional hearing set several weeks before the final hearing to enable them to request counsel. Now, counsel is appointed for parents when the case is filed. Orders in dependency cases are prepared and distributed to the parties or their attorneys within a couple of hours after the hearing. In many cases, the order is prepared by the judge and handed to the parties before they leave the courthouse.

The social services agency is held accountable for filing documents in a timely manner and for achieving court-approved goals within the specified time frame. With the agency responsible for achieving the goals and advising the court of case progress, all parties are able to focus on outcomes and assist in any problems the agency encounters.

At the request of the court, law enforcement now makes a report to social services in all domestic violence cases in which an officer observes a child in the home, even where there is no evidence the child was involved in the violence. This allows preventive services to be provided and helps to diminish the potential for violence against children. When a domestic violence case comes before the court, the judge often refers the matter to social services for investigation even when the criminal case is dismissed.

This Model Court also plans to:

- Participate in a CASA-sponsored, citywide domestic violence awareness training on the impact of violence on children.
- Provide Judicial Conference training on recent changes in Virginia abuse and neglect statutes.
- Place Model Court representatives on the State Court Improvement Project Training Subcommittee and the Forms and Policy Subcommittee.
- Provide additional training for attorneys who represent parties in dependency cases and for all judges who hear these types of cases.
- Ensure that parents are made aware of the potential impact of each court proceeding being held.
- Appoint the highest quality attorneys to represent parties and obtain interpreters to assist in appropriate cases.
- Set settlement meetings prior to the day of adjudication hearings so that stipulations can be made and matters resolved early.
- Implement laws recently passed requiring hearings on an earlier time frame than had previously been required.
- Continue diligent agency efforts to locate fathers early in each case, and request that the sheriff's office exert similar diligence in serving fathers.

Chicago Illinois

Model Court: Cook County Circuit Court Child Protection Division

Lead Judge: Nancy S. Salyers, Presiding Judge, Child Protection Division, Circuit Court of Cook County

Area served: Cook County

Estimated population: 5 million

Juvenile population: 1.7 million

Children in foster care: 39,800

Agency: State-based

Judges hearing dependency matters: 17 judges; additional court hearing officers also hear post-disposition matters and make recommendations to judges

Cases assigned: Random assignment

GAL: Attorney appointed in all cases

CASA: By appointment at request of parties or on judge's own motion

16

Chicago,
Illinois

Snapshot

As the judge describes plans for a new family/court conference, the participants in the two-day training session look at each other in concern. Which court would be the pilot for this project? Would the line workers agree to work in that court? The judge soon dispels

the notion of a pilot project: no pilot will be involved. Instead, all court rooms would be utilizing the new concept for early case resolution. The head of social services explains that his entire agency will be actively working on the new plans for early case resolution. He explains how his agency is going to immediately begin handling cases using new policies and practices. The lead prosecuting attorney and the lead defense attorney follow with similar pronouncements. Everyone involved in a dependency case is going to strive for early substantive hearings, timely resolution of cases or issues, and increased cooperation and collaboration with one goal in mind: to provide safe, permanent placement of children as soon as possible. Under the leadership of the judges, the project is moving forward rapidly. ■

SERVING the entire Chicago metropolitan area, the Child Protection Division of the Cook County Circuit Court has been fighting the gridlock that comes with overwhelming numbers for many years. With strong leadership and increased resources the tide has begun to turn. In 1995,

there were over 50,000 open child protection cases. Today there are just under 40,000. This dramatic change was achieved by a targeted effort to close cases no longer in need of court supervision and by closing more cases than are opened each month. Even at the current level, approximately 3% of children under 18 in Cook County are wards of the Child Protection Division.

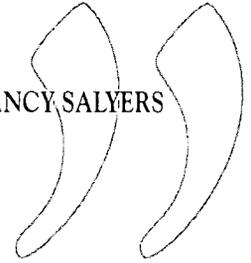
Presiding Judge Nancy Salyers meets quarterly with her Child Protection Advisory Work Group, composed of 30 professionals from offices, agencies and universities serving the court who address problem areas and recommend action. At the March 1997 training session, Judge Salyers responded to dozens of recommendations from 10 Work Group subcommittees, and goals for the coming year were identified.

The Permanency Project is a county-funded effort in conjunction with the Children and Family Justice Center of Northwestern University School of Law. This project works with Judge Salyers and the Work Group in the identification and implementation of procedural changes to eliminate barriers and bottlenecks that keep children from permanency.

A pilot Diligent Search Center, operated by Illinois Action for Children, has complet-

The Child Victims Model Courts Project is an invaluable benefit to us in Cook County, in that we are continually propelled from the philosophy of best ideas stage to the practice of best ideals. We know we don't stand alone and gladly accept the challenge of achieving timely permanency for children as an ongoing series of collaborations to change a system which had lost its focus.

—JUDGE NANCY SALTERS



ed 700 searches for absent parents in termination of parental rights cases, successfully demonstrating cost and time savings as well as increased efficiency available through centralized search efforts for absent parents.

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services began an Expedited Adoption Program, based on a similar program developed at Northwestern's Children and Family Justice Center. This program cuts a year off a child's wait for adoption in uncontested cases.

In the past year, the court has actively sup-

ported three pieces of legislation, working in concert with the Department of Children and Family Services on all three bills. Legislation has passed to facilitate parental consent to adoption and to expedite termination of parental rights in egregious cases. Another bill setting the initial permanency hearing at 12 months and providing for hearings each six months thereafter also is awaiting the governor's signature. A third bill, an extensive rewrite of the Juvenile Court Act, created with the cooperation of all offices of the court, foster parent organizations, social ser-

vices and the governor's office, also is scheduled to be enacted.

New direct services to children include the opening of the "Children's Room" by the Citizens Committee on the Juvenile Court. This facility provides a cheerful, stimulating environment for children who must spend long hours waiting in court. Also late last year, the court's annual holiday party was expanded to allow 700 children to participate. This successful, expanded use of the court facility stimulated a desire to do more, so the court joined with the social services agency, and the private community to create "Chances for Children" a festive event which brought together families interested in learning about adoption, children ready to be adopted, and adoption professionals. Active games and entertainment made the event an exciting outing for children, while serious information passed among adults. The sheriff's office was present to fingerprint prospective adoptive parents, a state requirement that often causes substantial delay.

In April, 200 members of the court community met together in a two-day conference, sponsored by the NCJFCJ, called "Children Can't Wait" to take stock of the past, look to the future, and prepare to work together on the following goals:

- Establish and implement a court family conference, in which all parties meet and exchange information within 60 days of removal of a child, with specific requirements set forth that parents must meet in order to be reunified with their children.
- Adopt a staggered call for dependency cases.
- Institute temporary custody hearings of one hour minimum, based on *RESOURCE GUIDELINES* recommendations.
- Form a subcommittee to explore the impact of federal welfare reform of the Child Protection Division.
- Encourage filing of a petition for termination of parental rights even when no adoptive home has been identified, with continued reports and reviews by the judge until adoption is completed.
- Address backlog of termination of parental rights cases.
- Train judges and hearing officers on subsidized guardianships and adoptions and establish a court-sponsored orientation program for caseworkers.
- Establish court-based Resource Centers which provide immediate access to services for families and children as they leave the courtroom.
- Fully implement the subsidized guardianship option.
- Expand the Diligent Search Center's capacity.
- Continue strategic planning.

Cincinnati Ohio

Model Court: Hamilton County Juvenile Court

Lead Judge: David E. Grossmann, Presiding Administrative Judge

Area served: Hamilton County encompassing metropolitan Cincinnati and surrounding vicinity

Estimated population: 900,000

Juvenile population: 250,000

Children in out-of-home placement: 1,300

Agency: County

Judges hearing dependency matters: 1 judge and 6 magistrates filling four full-time dependency positions

Cases assigned: By date of Day One hearing

GAL: Social worker GAL appointed for children with attorney backup as needed; attorney GAL appointed in any case involving alleged abuse

CASA: By appointment

20

Cincinnati,
Ohio

Snapshot

The magistrate at a "Day One" hearing listens intently while a social service agency

caseworker explains what services can be offered to the family of a neglected

child. The magistrate is an attorney appointed to serve in a judicial capacity, providing advi-

sory recommendations to the court. The caseworker is explaining what type and frequency of service would best help this family. The child's mother angrily interrupts. Although the magistrate serves in a judicial capacity, he wears a business suit rather than a robe. He turns to the angry mother, patiently explaining that the caseworker should be allowed to state her position. He assures the mother that she will soon be allowed to respond in kind. The mother quiets. The hearing continues. The caseworker recommends that this neglect case be referred to a non-profit case management organization at work within the jurisdiction. FCF Management, Inc. (FCFM) is a non-profit group contracted to serve Cincinnati area children in need of intensive, coordinated services from multiple systems. Children and families referred to FCFM can obtain needed evaluations and appropriate treatment or placements within 24-72 hours after referral. The guardian ad litem (GAL) agrees with the FCFM referral. The GAL is a social worker in this case because there was no allegation of abuse. The mother, supported by her appointed attorney, is then allowed to respond. She speaks of her frustration with her child's many emotion-

al and physical needs and her own struggle with chemical dependency. Acknowledging that the court and service agency have recognized these problems, she nods in agreement with the plan for visitation during treatment and the goal of reunification. ■

VISITORS to a "Day One" hearing held in Cincinnati's Hamilton County Juvenile Court often are surprised by the informal mood of the proceedings. A Day One hearing is the first court proceeding held immediately after the filing of the complaint. The hearings are organized to encourage cooperation rather than an adversarial atmosphere. The hearing represents an attempt to defuse hostilities, to gain the cooperation of the parties, and to assist parties in attacking the problem rather than each other. Parents have a right to be represented by counsel; if a parent qualifies, appointed counsel is offered. Children are represented by a guardian ad litem (GAL). If the allegations involve abuse, an attorney is appointed as GAL. If not, a social worker is appointed. The agency is represented by the county prose-

cutor's office. Because of the presence of either a judge or a judicially-appointed magistrate, and because all parties to the proceedings are represented, it is unnecessary in most cases to have medical, psychological, or therapeutic service providers at the hearing. All parties are made aware of any reports submitted prior to the hearing, and do not often dispute their content.

During Day One hearings, and at all subsequent proceedings, the judge or magistrate controls his or her own calendar, and determines the time and date for the next hearing.

As a result of the Day One hearing, a case plan is prepared. In most cases, the case plan goal is reunification; the case plan outlines the services the agency is offering to assist the family and child toward this goal and the requirements the parent must meet in order for reunification with the child to take place.

Review hearings are scheduled no later than six months apart, and are routinely scheduled much more frequently. At the end of each hearing, all parties remain in the hearing room until after the magistrate has finished writing or typing an interim order. The recommended order is signed,

copied, and handed to all parties. Parties then have 10 days to object before the recommendation is given to the judge for approval.

The Hamilton County Juvenile Court was one of the first courts in the nation to establish a working one-family/one-judge calendaring system. This allows the judges or magistrates to become familiar with children, parents, foster parents, and others involved in each abuse or neglect case. In most instances, a single judge or magistrate handles each case from its initial Day One hearing all the way through final disposition—whether the family is rehabilitated and reunited, or whether parental rights are terminated.

If a rehabilitated family is reunited, but the case is later reactivated because of another incident requiring court intervention, it is once again placed on the same magistrate's docket. If the parents' rights are terminated, the same judge or magistrate continues to review the case at a minimum of every six months pending adoption of the child. The final decision on adoption of a child is handled by the Hamilton County Probate Court.

In 1996, the court, with full support from the state, accepted the bid of a non-

We have been fortunate to work with the National Council to achieve true, systemic changes in Cincinnati's dependency proceedings over the past seven years. Yet we know that timeliness and efficiency in case processing are only goals; and efforts to improve court practice in abuse and neglect cases must be exerted on an ongoing basis.

—JUDGE DAVID GROSSMANN

profit organization, FCF Management, Inc. (FCFM) to act as the case manager for high-end, needy children. While FCFM case managers set up services, the social service department workers continue to maintain responsibility for all cases referred to FCFM. All dependency referrals made to FCFM are from the social service department. FCFM provides wrap-around services to the family members in a timely fashion. Such services could include both psychiatric and chemical dependency evaluations, as well as place-

ment in institutional care facilities. FCFM is able to have access to the social service department's contract with Alcohol & Drug Addiction Services (ADAS), which provides evaluations and appropriate treatment facilities for a parent or child within 24-72 hours of the referral. The agency no longer spends inordinate amounts of time searching out an appropriate bed or institution for care. Although the system is still new, the cost savings and benefits to children and families are already apparent.

These and other reforms instituted by

the Hamilton County Juvenile Court have resulted in a dramatic reduction in the temporary care population from an estimated 5,000 children in 1990 to 1,500 children in care in March 1997.

Another new program established by the court helps address truancy problems in certain schools. This truancy program was started in 1996 with the sponsorship of five private corporations which funded the specialized program at five schools. Funding supports a magistrate's weekly visit and service providers to work with at-risk children and their families. Additional schools are anxious to be added to the program.

The Hamilton County Juvenile Court serves as a national "Demonstration Site" where improved practice in dependency cases can be studied for replication in other courts across the nation. Judges and other government officials continue to frequently visit the Cincinnati court to study its dependency process for potential replication in other court systems.

The Hamilton County Juvenile Court continues to seek ways to further improve its system and has set the following goals for the next 12-18 months:

- Hamilton County Department of Human Services will place 150 children in adoptive homes by June 1997.
- By October 1997, Hamilton County Juvenile Court and Hamilton County Department of Human Services will create and develop an implementation plan concerning policy statements defining acceptable use of long term foster care and temporary custody extensions.
- Hamilton County Juvenile Court is participating with 24 counties in Ohio, Indiana, and northern Kentucky in community awareness events which will call attention to the need for adoptive homes.
- Phase I of implementation of an improved tracking software system will be in place in 3-6 months. Phase II will be implemented within the next 12 months.
- All dependency staff and magistrates will be trained in the new software system within 12 months.
- By August 1997, Hamilton County Juvenile Court will set forth standards for the training and continuing education of guardians ad litem for children and counsel for parents in abuse, neglect and dependency cases. The court will assist with this training.
- Hamilton County Juvenile Court by the end of 1997 will have examined all dependency cases closed but then again reopened or reactivated. Identification and study of reactivated cases is expected to help the court develop strategies for reducing the number of these types of cases.

El Paso Texas

Model Court: 65th Judicial District Court

Lead Judge: Patricia A. Macias, Associate Judge

Area served: El Paso County

Estimated population: 670,000 (2.5 million within metroplex of Juarez and Las Cruces)

Juvenile population: 193,000

Children in out-of-home placement: 491

Agency: State

Judges hearing dependency matters: One judge assigned to dependency cases; one judge assigned to termination of parental rights cases

Cases assigned: Entire dependency caseload assigned to one judge

GAL: Appointed only in certain cases

CASA: By appointment

Snapshot

The mother and father of a child residing in foster care placement wear headphones in the court room. Four other participants in the hearing also wear headsets. As an attorney for the state social service

agency speaks to the judge, an interpreter quietly speaks into a microphone, translating each word into Spanish for the participants. As the attorney finishes, the judge states that she would like to hear testimony from the psychologist who prepared the evaluation being considered. The agency attorney knew that the judge would require this, so she has brought the psychologist, the therapist and other service providers to the hearing. The attorney presents lengthy testimony from the psychologist. The parents

have no attorney to question this evidence. However, the judge repeatedly questions the witness, asking for clarification on some points, and for comparisons and qualifications. When the psychologist is finished, the judge asks the child's foster parent to take the stand. The local foster parent group in El Paso is well-organized; it is unusual for foster parents to miss any hearing involving a child in their care. The foster parent also wears a headset. ■

Access to judicial expertise from around the country, on-site visits to other model courts, and direct communication with the National Council for research has provided our court with invaluable support in our court improvement efforts. The collaborative efforts encouraged by the 'Model Court' process has led all 'stakeholders' involved to work creatively and most important, cooperatively.

—JUDGE PATRICIA MACIAS

As a recently-designated Model Court, Texas' 65th Judicial District faces challenges intrinsic to its geography and diverse population. El Paso is located immediately adjacent to the Mexican city of Juarez (population 1.8 million). The proximity of the national border, and the movement of children and families across it, add to the complexity of dependency cases in this jurisdiction. Additional challenges faced by this Model Court include the lack of a case-tracking system and limited judicial resources.

Jurisdiction strengths include the existence of an organized and active foster parent group whose members play an essential community role and work closely with the court in providing safe, stable placement alternatives for children. Key stakeholders, including court staff, agency representatives, attorneys, advocates, and foster parents were introduced to Model Court planning late in 1996. A series of interdisciplinary meetings was followed by site visits to the Hamilton County (Cincinnati, Ohio) and Santa Clara County (San Jose, Calif.) Diversion Model Courts.

These initial discussions, site visits, and planning sessions have resulted in the following 1997 Model Court goals:

- Creation of assessment foster homes designed to decrease the number of foster care placements and to increase "front-loading" of services to children and parents.
- Establishment of pro bono legal representation for children needing documentation of legal status.
- Cooperative program with the Family Law Association to provide pro bono representation in child welfare cases with training to be provided in 1997.
- Appointment of CASA volunteers as guardians ad litem for children with training programs and protocols to be established.
- Provide review hearings via teleconference when a child is placed in out-of-county residential treatment.
- Holding a teen summit for teen foster children to voice their concerns and suggestions for improvement of the system.
- Establishment of a permanency planning/adoption task force to improve court procedures, social work practices, and develop specific time lines for planning.
- Establish a mediation program for dependency cases.

Miami Florida

Model Court: Dade County Juvenile Court

Lead Judge: D. Bruce Levy, Administrative Judge, Juvenile Division, Circuit Court

Area served: Miami metropolitan and surrounding areas

Estimated population: 2.5 million

Juvenile population: 500,000

Children in out-of-home placement: 1,512 children in foster care and shelter care; 4,603 children in families under supervision

Agency: State

Judges hearing dependency matters: 3 and one hearing officer who can hear matters with both parties in agreement

Cases assigned: Random

GAL: A pool of volunteers, with pro bono attorneys to assist, referred cases which are taken on a priority basis; attorney for a child sometimes appointed

CASA: Incorporated in the GAL program

Judges, a general master, attorneys, social service representatives and guardians ad litem are seated

Snapshot

together around a table during a goal-setting meeting called to identify ways to

improve court practice in child abuse and neglect cases. Each participant appears subdued, over-

The value of the Model Court is a paradigm shift in how we deal with children and families. By concentrating on intensive front-end services and strict time frames, we can accomplish permanency for children in the shortest possible time.

—JUDGE BRUCE LEVY

whelmed by the prospect of broad, systemic change. Many children remain in out-of-home placement, including placement with relatives, with little government supervision. It is difficult to sort out the steps necessary to make needed changes. A facilitator looks at the 20 people gathered together and asks them to identify ways to improve what already is done well. The participants are then asked to identify barriers to good practice. There is general agreement that too many children remain in out-of-home placement without a plan for permanency, and that too many children await termination of parental rights and adoption. A rough plan is developed for approaching these two major problems.

Agency officials agree to have child welfare workers review the status of children placed with relatives, and to present permanency plans for court review and closure, when appropriate. Judges agree to new court calendar priorities and to emphasize the importance of timely termination proceedings. Court improvement efforts have begun. ■

MIAMI JUDGES, attorneys and staff early in 1996 traveled to the Demonstration Court in Cincinnati, Ohio, for on-site study of court improvements in dependency practice. Many were encouraged by what they

saw. Upon their return to Miami, interdisciplinary discussions resulted in a carefully crafted set of realizable goals to systemically improve government's response to abused and neglected children within the court's jurisdiction. Goal attainment has been difficult because of a heavy court caseload and resultant backlog, but consistent and continuing cooperation from all participants in the dependency process has helped initiate the first of many expected improvements.

In early 1996, Miami was faced with over 2,600 cases in which 7,000 children had been in placements with relatives for extended periods of time. After several months of intensive work, the number of cases under court supervision was reduced to 1,800, and all remaining cases had been reviewed and scheduled for work-up. With the assistance of senior judges and judges from other divisions, the court set aside calendar time to address the backlog of contested termination of parental rights hearings and staffing procedures to assure timely case processing. By May 1997, the court had closed 237 termination cases and was continuing to expedite the processing of 347 cases still pending.

Court goals during the next year include initiation of a *Pilot Project* and an *Improvement Project*. The *Pilot Project* will:

- Select a limited number of appropriate "pilot" cases for intensive work by a Department of Children and Families team that provides an individualized service plan and activates appropriate service to divert cases from court.
- Conduct early substantive hearings for pilot cases and continue strict time lines for regular review hearings and permanency hearings.
- Identify issues and barriers to the processing of pilot cases.
- Identify barriers to substantive, early hearings and present them to the *Improvement Project* for resolution.

The *Improvement Project* will:

- Create goal-specific work groups involving staff from all dependency court service partners.
- Prioritize issues for immediate improvement, investigate solutions, implement change, monitor statistics and evaluate results.
- Initiate Work Group action on *Pilot Project* barriers.

Nashville Tennessee

Model Court: Juvenile Court of Davidson County

Lead Judge: Andrew J. Shookhoff, Juvenile Court Judge

Area served: Davidson County

Estimated population: 511,000

Juvenile population: 116,000

Children in out-of-home placement: 700

Agency: County

Judges hearing dependency matters: One judge, one full-time referee, one part-time referee

Cases assigned: Judge hears dependency matters, all petitions for termination of parental rights, and appeals from referee decisions; referees receive assigned cases

GAL: Appointed by the court on its own motion or on motion of a party

CASA: Referral made by the court

Snapshot

Seated in a circle, a group of men and women look warily at each other. One man stands and

introduces himself as the facilitator of this Family

Unity Conference, also known

as a family group conference, called in response to problems being experienced by a child and

The Model Courts Projects has helped us identify strategies for improving our handling of neglect and abuse cases. The flexibility of the project is one of its greatest strengths. While the RESOURCE GUIDELINES provide a standard against which to measure our practices and a conceptional framework for improvement, we are able to choose our priorities based on the particular strengths and needs of our jurisdiction. The project supports, encourages, and provides technical assistance and expertise to help us. However, it recognizes that we must ultimately be responsible for necessary leadership and commitment. The project has provided us with a wonderful opportunity to draw on the expertise of others around the country for training and to learn from the experience of other courts so that we are not reinventing the wheel.

—JUDGE ANDREW SHOOKHOFF

mother. The facilitator asks others in the circle to introduce themselves and to explain their relationship to the case. Present are the maternal grandparents, paternal grandmother, two aunts, one uncle, the minister from the mother's church, one of the mother's girlfriends, and a neighbor from next door. Over the next hour, the conversation about what to do with this family in crisis

moves back and forth among the participants. At times heated arguments break out. The facilitator gently brings the parties back to focus on the issues and the discussion progresses. After a plan of action is formed and agreed upon, the participants sit back and relax. Conversations break out among them and members of an audience invited to witness this training exercise. The facilitator

tor/trainer then leads the discussion into ways that the participants can begin to incorporate Family Group Conferencing into their dependency caseloads. ■

TRAINING in the Family Unity Model was initiated after a Model Court orientation meeting identified alternative dispute resolution, including family conferencing and mediation, as a useful new tool in court handling of child abuse and neglect cases. After initial training in the Family Unity Model, the court now is working with small groups of social service staff who participate in actual family conferences. This process will allow staff members to gain experience, and then to teach new techniques to other caseworkers. Increasing familiarity with the Family Unity Model also will allow court and social service personnel to more quickly recognize the types of cases which would benefit most from family group conferences.

Key members of the court recently attended a two-day training in mediation at the Santa Clara County Superior Court in San Jose, Calif., which is serving as a National Demonstration Site for mediation and family group conferencing.

This Model Court is in its initial stage of setting goals and beginning improvements. Goals set for the coming year include:

- Developing and applying Family Group Conferencing techniques in appropriate cases.
- Providing improved advocacy for parents and children by appointing qualified counsel prior to the first hearing.
- Establishing guidelines for appointment of counsel.
- Expediting termination of parental rights petitions.
- Reorganizing and increasing staff for foster care/permanency planning review hearings.
- Involving the court in the recruitment of adoption and foster homes.
- Enhancing information systems to produce standard reports and to provide computerized scheduling and tracking.
- Targeting projects to improve drug and alcohol services and services for seriously emotionally disturbed children.

Newark New Jersey

Model Court: Superior Court, Family Division, Essex County

Lead Judge: Philip M. Freedman, Presiding Judge

Jurisdiction: Essex County, Newark, and other urban and suburban areas

Estimated population: 778,000

Juvenile population: 189,000

Children in out-of-home placement: 2,864

Agency: State

Judges hearing dependency cases: 3 judges, including one assigned to hear all termination of parental rights cases

Cases assigned: By docket number

GAL: Appointed in all cases

CASA: Referred by the court, cases accepted according to priority

Child Placement Review Boards: Volunteers serve on 10 boards reviewing all voluntary placements, which include an estimated 80% of children living out of home

34

Newark,
New Jersey

Snapshot

On a Wednesday morning, four of five members of the Child Placement Review Board are meeting in a small conference room on the first floor of the historic, crowded courthouse in downtown Newark, N.J. They are joined by a social services

representative. Before beginning their work, they compare stories about parking snags and traffic problems. A large stack of files sits before the chairperson. Each file folder represents a case not heard on the prior Friday's calendar which had to be continued for this Wednesday morning. The volunteer members of the Review Board each had agreed to make another trip downtown to finish their work. They begin discussion of the first case, which involves a young girl. An identifying sticker attached to the file indicates that the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Office has reviewed the file, determined that CASA would potentially take the case based upon a prioritized set of criteria, and is monitoring the case for future action. The child's foster mother is present and is invited to testify. Board members review the complete file and ask the supervising social worker to place a telephone call to the caseworker to review some information. The board members discuss the case; apply their experience over past years of volunteering, teaching, and social work; and analyze the case plan and progress. After more than an hour's discussion, the members complete their recommendations for the judge. These recommendations are sent to the judge for approval. ■

APPROXIMATELY 80 percent of children living outside their homes in New Jersey are placed through voluntary agreements. These children are overseen by state Child Placement Review (CPR) Boards made up of carefully screened and trained volunteers. CPR Boards report to the judge assigned to each case. The 11 boards meet at least once each month for a minimum one-half day to review their large caseloads.

Model Court improvement efforts in the Superior Court, Family Division, Essex County are principally dependent upon the commitment and enthusiasm of professionals at work within the system, and of the broad array of volunteers serving on CPR Boards and as Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs).

Because increased funding is not immediately available to support court improvement goals, important, cost-neutral innovations have been identified. With court support, agencies have begun working together on several collaborative projects. One of these is the establishment of a one-family/one-judge calendaring system under which judges hold review hearings on litigated cases at least every 3-4 months. All

The assistance and training provided by the Child Victims Model Courts Project are key elements in attempting to improve services the court gives to children and parents who become involved in the child welfare system.

—JUDGE PHILIP FREEDMAN

disciplines agree that frequent review and monitoring is needed to move cases forward. In litigated cases, the public defender is appointed to be a law guardian for the children; at times, the public defender's office may also represent the parents.

Under the direction of a family court manager, and with the support of the court, employees have been reassigned and offices re-organized throughout the family court. Training in permanency planning and improved court practice is being planned and implemented for both court and agency personnel. Both new and re-assigned employees have begun building a consensus for action, with new ideas for improvement

encouraged. CPR Board chairs have been involved in many discussions. New board members have been recruited and trained and plans have been made to increase the size and number of CPR Boards.

The CASA director has initiated an improved case tracking system for CASA administrators under which a case is reviewed as soon as it is filed to determine whether a CASA appointment is necessary. CASA volunteers are trained for a minimum of 28 hours and provided additional education as necessary. Progress also continues on Essex County's participation in the New Jersey Family Automated Case Tracking System (FACTS). This tracking system,

supported by the New Jersey Supreme Court Information Services Department, develops reports needed to track each guardianship (termination of parental rights) case within the county. An on-site training program was held in April 1997, and future judicially-sponsored training is scheduled for all protective system partners.

Although petitions for court intervention may not be filed immediately after placement of a child, social services begins to provide an array of services to families and children upon the initial referral. Workers are dedicated to assuring reasonable efforts to safely avoid removal of a child from his or her family and to promote timely and safe reunification. Already there have been notable increases in: the number of volunteers available to review the large number of children in out-of-home placement; and the availability of counsel for parents in litigated cases.

Court goals for the coming year include:

- Establish a multidisciplinary steering committee made up of participants from all sectors involved in dependency cases to work collaboratively on improvements for the court and the system.
- Provide a substantive hearing within one week of involuntary removal of a child from the home.
- Establish a policy on adjournments (continuances) so that all parties are aware of the limited provision for continuing a case from a set hearing date.
- Change the calendaring system to enforce the one judge/one family system.
- Continue open communication between judges and the foster care review board members to enable each to operate more effectively.
- Continue data information system improvements to allow access to tracking information about children in out-of-home placement.

Reno Nevada

Model Court: Second Judicial District Court

Lead Judge: Charles M. McGee, District Court Judge, Family Division

Area served: Incorporated cities of Reno and Sparks and outlying areas of Washoe County

Estimated Population: 300,000

Juvenile Population: 79,000

Children in out-of-home placement: County supervised: 60

State supervised: 500

Agency: County (short-term cases); State (long-term cases)

Judges hearing dependency matters: two judges and one master

Cases assigned: By family if prior involvement; otherwise, by date of filing

GAL: Appointed; cases taken on a priority basis

CASA: Yes, as resources allow

38
Reno,
Nevada

Snapshot

The courtroom is crowded. At a table in front normally reserved for defendants sits a young woman. Her happy gestures and smiling face belie the harsh criminal drug prosecution and loss of parental rights she faces. But her criminal charges wait in abeyance. If she

successfully completes the Family Drug Court program, the charges will be dropped. She knows she is doing well with her second chance. As the judge asks about her new boyfriend, onlookers erupt in laughter. The judge looks benignly around the room, and explains, "I am going to ask all of you about your relationships, because that is the main reason for failing in sobriety. You must choose whether you want to work to get your children back or to get into a relationship that could harm you." In answer to his concern, the woman confirms that nothing is as important to her as having her baby home with her. The judge acknowledges that she is doing well and tells her he will see her in two weeks. When the judge calls the next name on the court docket, onlookers stand and cheer because it is this Family Drug Court participant's graduation day. The judge stands, takes off his judicial robe, steps down from the bench and greets the former defendant with a hug, saying, "I now greet you as a friend: I no longer sit in judgment of you." ■

WASHOE COUNTY'S 18-month-old Family Drug Court is an acclaimed success. Parents in danger of losing their children and in danger of criminal prosecution for their abuse of alcohol or drugs are allowed to participate if: they show a desire to become sober and abstain from drug use; take parenting classes; and adhere to a strict court appearance schedule. The normal program lasts one year. Graduation is tied to maintaining a clean and sober record during the year, making improvements in lifestyle, and their obtaining reunification with their children or agreeing to relinquishment and open adoption of the children. So far, 25 participants have successfully graduated from the Family Drug Court program.

In addition to its Family Drug Court, the Family Division of the Washoe County District Court has developed system-wide procedures to ensure that all children and families involved in abuse and neglect cases come to the court's attention as early as possible. Court scheduling of all dependency cases was recently revamped in response to recommendations from a multidisciplinary Technical Working Group studying court

I am amazed that I never really saw or understood the injustice in the courts here until I really started looking.

One of the main goals of this project needs to be raising the consciousness of others, including the public and governmental officials, to the reality of the problem.

—JUDGE CHARLES MCGEE

and social service agency operations.

The Technical Working Group is comprised of court personnel, county and school officials, volunteers, prosecuting attorneys, agency attorneys, attorneys for parents, and representatives of law enforcement, social services, and the office of the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). The group has been meeting regularly to formulate plans for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of child protection and service delivery. The group's initial recommendations have prompted the court to schedule longer preparation periods and longer hear-

ings in the early stages of a case, front-loading the process to help secure timely and appropriate service delivery.

The Technical Working Group also was responsible for the appointment of a new integrated case manager to handle cases involving families with more than two children whose needs involve different agencies. The case manager was first hired in the Fall of 1996 and given a discretionary budget to work with different agencies and service providers, and thereby reduce or eliminate delays in case processing.

Technical Working Group members

and related Washoe County representatives also have received training in how to identify available federal program supports and then how to maximize the use of federal foster care funds. The interdisciplinary Working Group continues its study of potential improvements in government's response to abused and neglected children. The preliminary findings were presented to and approved by the Washoe County Commission early in 1997. The court is working with the commission on the goals proposed by the Working Group.

Because of a split in jurisdiction between the county (short-term cases) and state social services (long-term cases), much of the focus in this Model Court has also involved statewide improvements. Washoe County judges working with the Nevada Juvenile Justice Commission have been authorized to review and help establish juvenile policy for the state. The result this year will be a legislative proposal to revise the entire continuum of care in dependency cases—from community resource-sharing and improved access to services, to integrated and seamless case management for families in need.

In addition to this legislative proposal and work on the Technical Working Group proposals, the court is progressing toward its 1997 goals which include:

- Enhancing services through the Family Drug Court, the Governor's Family-to-Family Project, and the collaborative Family Resource Centers to achieve early reunification whenever possible.
- Proposing legislation to allow custodianships which are permanent placements and which recount reasonable efforts made.
- Proposing legislation to expand areas of court jurisdiction to allow court intervention in a case involving a "threat of harm."
- Revising confidentiality laws in dependency cases.
- Initiating a special collaborative project to provide for prioritization of adoption efforts for special needs children.
- Proposing legislation to shorten the time period for obtaining permanency.
- Instituting a program to allow appointed and trained counsel to be given to all indigent parents in the initial hearing.
- Providing additional training for foster parents.

Salt Lake City Utah

Model Court: 3rd Judicial District Juvenile Court

Lead Judge: Judge Sharon P. McCully, Juvenile Court Judge

Area served: Salt Lake, Tooele, and Summit Counties

Estimated Population: 823,000

Juvenile Population: 273,000

Children in out-of-home placement: 2,300

Judges hearing dependency cases: 8

Agency: State-based

GAL: Attorney appointed for every child

CASA: Statewide program; volunteers appointed at court's discretion or may request case appointments

▷ 42

Salt Lake City,
Utah

The Salt Lake City courtroom looks much like any other courtroom, except for a large number of men and women seated at counsel table in front of the judge. A hearing is being held to consider a termination of

S n a p s h o t

parental rights case. Sitting side by side along the length of the table are: a deputy attorney general representing the social service agency; an attorney guardian

ad litem (GAL), appointed immediately after removal to represent the children at issue; a defense attorney, appointed early in the case to represent the parents; and the mother and father. Also present in the courtroom are a caseworker and a representative from the Court Appointed Special Advocate's Office (CASA) who works with the GAL. Because the children involved were infants when removed, they were automatically placed with a foster/adoption family to begin the process of healthy attachment and possibly shorten adoption procedures. The foster/adoption parents also are present in the courtroom, and watch nervously as the proceedings begin. The attorneys and advocates know each other well because they function as a "team" assigned to this courtroom, servicing all dependency cases set before this particular judge. In this jurisdiction, the "permanency" hearing must be held within 12 months after the filing of a petition, but may be scheduled even sooner. In this case, a petition for termination of parental rights was filed immediately after the 12-month dispositional review hearing, with the termination hearing set soon

after. Under federal law, the permanency plan must be in place within 18 months of the removal of the child from his or her home. The judge calls the hearing to order. ■

SALT LAKE CITY courts started changing their handling of dependency cases soon after a consent decree was entered in a lawsuit in Utah protesting the duration and quality of foster care provided for abused and neglected children. Working closely with the Salt Lake City judiciary, interested legislators in 1994 made significant statutory modifications. These new laws and a related increase in funding were aimed at reducing the number of children in placement longer than 12 months, and at devoting increased time and resources to Utah's growing number of children in foster care.

A year after the new laws were enacted, the processing of newly-filed dependency cases had improved in both timeliness and efficiency. However, long-term cases continued to languish in the court system. Additional legislation prompted a temporary, targeted initia-

We were fortunate to have our State Legislature incorporate major changes suggested by the RESOURCE GUIDELINES into the law of Utah, and to provide resources to allow us to make the improvements. The families and children of Utah have benefitted from the focus placed on achieving permanency within a short time period.

—JUDGE SHARON MCCULLY

**Salt Lake City,
Utah**

tive which provided additional judges and staff assigned to move existing cases to permanency as quickly as possible. This phase successfully concluded last year with the permanent placement of 700 children.

Continuing cooperation between judicial and legislative leaders has fostered even more foster care system improvements. Through state-based efforts, as well as continued involvement in the Child Victims Model Courts Project, judges in Salt Lake City, together with advocates and attorneys, have set new

goals, instituted systemic changes, and continue to plan future improvements.

Shelter hearings are now held within 72 hours of a child's removal from his or her home. During the first 72 hours, the case worker, parents, educators, clergy, and the court appointed guardian ad litem (GAL), meet to discuss the possibility of reunification, placement alternatives, and each child's particular needs. Judges dedicate at least one-half hour to hearing all parties at the shelter hearing. Because of a statutory change mandating the hearing be held within 72

hours instead of 48 hours, the parties have more time to prepare for the hearing, locate relatives, and obtain reports. All hearings are held within a strict time line. The dispositional review hearing at which the permanency plan must be established is held within 12 months of the removal. The case must be finalized within 18 months.

Specific time is set aside for a more comprehensive shelter hearing, so scheduling is easier. The court has implemented a one-family/one-judge system. In response to scheduling needs and large caseloads in each courtroom, the court and attorneys have developed a “team approach,” with one deputy attorney general, one attorney appointed to represent the parents, and one child’s GAL handling all cases before a particular judge. Supported financially by the legislature, additional attorneys were hired so each courtroom-dedicated team can function effectively.

As a result of the innovations imposed by the legislature and the court, agencies and attorney practices also have changed. Representatives of the various sectors meet often for cross training and panel discussions. The Fam-

Goals set for the coming year include:

- Send Salt Lake City Model Court representatives to on-site training at Santa Clara County Superior Court, San Jose, Calif., where both innovative mediation and family group conferencing techniques are being applied to child welfare cases.
- Develop a plan for implementing mediation and family group conferencing in appropriate cases before Salt Lake City juvenile and family courts.
- Institute Salt Lake City-specific calendaring changes, including second pre-trial meetings before each trial to be used as a non-adversarial settlement conference.
- Conduct permanency hearings at nine months following removal, with petitions to terminate filed within one month of the hearing. Termination hearings could, therefore, be held closer to the 12-month deadline.
- Better define kinship preference and remove statutory barriers from quick kinship placement. Improve reunification services provided to parents whose children are in kinship placements as opposed to foster care.
- Conduct interdisciplinary training on placement options and services available to children and parents.
- Increase funding for defense attorneys representing parents.
- Create a court administrative position to track, monitor, and evaluate court performance in dependency cases.

ily Agency Communities Together (FACT) collaboration brings a case to the table for joint creative placement with pooling of money and resources to address the problem. This initial effort often results in services being identified and provided that allow a child to remain safely in his or her home.

Two Children's Justice Centers have

been opened as facilities where agencies can provide coordinated investigations and where a caseworker and law enforcement officer can interview a child in a non-threatening environment. A multidisciplinary death review is held in response to the death of any child who has been the subject of a dependency review or action.

Tucson Arizona

Model Court: Pima County Juvenile Court

Lead Judge: Nanette M. Warner

Area served: Pima County

Estimated Population: 900,000

Juvenile population: 102,000

Children in out-of-home placement: 850

Agency: State

Judges hearing dependency matters: 9 judges and hearing officers

Cases assigned: Rotating calendar

GAL: Attorney appointed for every child

CASA: Statewide program; volunteers appointed at court's discretion or may request case appointments

Seated around a table are each of the judges and hearing officers who hear dependency matters. Joining them are representatives

Snapshot

from the state attorney general's office, the Behavioral Health agency,

administrative office of the court, social service agency, foster parents organization, and private attorneys. One after another, the

Our Model Court process has empowered the entire family to be responsible for the children. Children are being placed sooner in kinship placements. Parents are actively engaged early in the case plan and know they will lose their children if they do not quickly remedy the problems.

—JUDGE NANETTE M. WARNER

participants raise their hands to suggest improvements in the Tucson court system. Many volunteer to participate on subcommittees to put the best suggestions to work. The participants are enthusiastic about the potential for change in court policies and practices. All agree to work together on a pilot project so that any problems can be identified and rectified before changes are applied throughout the court system. Volunteers are assigned to various subcommittees to design the pilot project. This will entail: development of standard

orders, subpoenas, and notices; training for private counsel to be appointed to pilot project cases; and a decision on the types of cases to be examined through the pilot project. Case selection is expected to be integral to the quality and quantity of information available to the improvement committee. The participants soon realize that they need some additional training in dealing with social service delivery systems and funding; training sessions are scheduled for the coming months. ■

AN ORIENTATION meeting for the Child Victims Model Courts committee was held in Tucson in November 1996. Forty individuals, including lead judges from other Model Courts, participated in the meeting where ideas for improvement were exchanged and preliminary goals set. Under the leadership of Judge Nanette Warner, monthly meetings were scheduled to further define and implement the goals set at the orientation meeting.

An early goal was the establishment of a pilot court project, to begin in 1997, in which cases directed to one court would be front-loaded and held to a strict time line for adjudication, disposition, and review. Through a continuing series of monthly meetings, the committee established subcommittees to deal with particular areas identified for the pilot project examination. Standard notices were drafted and approved to allow the parties to know when the first substantive hearing was to be held and to provide for appointment of counsel. Standard orders were drafted to enable judges to immediately distribute orders

at the completion of each court hearing. Social service agency intake teams were identified to work in conjunction with the pilot project and to be trained in the requirements of the *RESOURCE GUIDELINES*.

Goals for the coming year include:

- Expanding this Child Victims Model Court pilot project to include all the courts within 3-6 months.
- Establishing a one judge/one family system.
- Improving the calendaring system.
- Implementing complete, substantive hearings at the earliest possible time.
- Improving data collection and information retrieval systems.
- Interdisciplinary training to improve court/agency collaboration in dependency cases.

Conclusion

A plan for action

Each of the 10 Model Courts at work in the NCJFCJ's Child Victims Project faces unique opportunities and barriers as it struggles to better serve children and families. Although each court must find individual approaches to systemic change, benefits can be derived from several strong, common elements available to all juvenile and family court systems:

1. Judicial leadership and inspiration;
2. Collaboration and commitment from all parties;
3. Realistic goal setting;
4. Directed efforts;
5. Data collection and measurement.

Judicial leadership and inspiration

Lead Judges at work in the Child Victims Model Courts Project have been able to coalesce divergent professions to work together, asking each to assess strengths and weaknesses, identify barriers to improved practice, and set attainable, interdisciplinary goals. This positive, interdis-

plinary cooperation has been a success factor in all 10 Model Courts.

Collaboration and commitment from all parties

Several Model Courts initially believed that effective improvements were hindered by a lack of additional court funds. Without sufficient funding for additional staff, judges, caseworkers, or services, true systemic change was considered beyond reach. Encouraged by the example of cost-neutral improvements at the initial Model Court in Cincinnati, and aided by technical assistance from the Child Victims Project Staff, Lead Judges initiated careful and comprehensive study of the way each court conducts business.

Model Courts found that while judicial leadership was necessary, close collaboration with service providers, agency administrators, and attorneys also was essential. Model courts in Alexandria, Miami, and Salt Lake City brought parties together to plan changes. Nashville and Chicago asked Child Victims Project staff to develop and

implement interdisciplinary training. Tucson and Reno developed and assigned teams to work in specific areas, identify problems, and propose solutions.

When lack of funding was identified as a true barrier, the courts worked with agencies and attorneys to develop improvements involving only minimal funding outlays. In El Paso, immigration attorneys came forward to volunteer their expertise in obtaining documentation for children in placement. In Cincinnati, the court worked with providers to establish a non-profit management organization to oversee service provision to multiple-need families. Tucson and Miami initiated pilot projects to carefully identify and track all court improvement costs and potential savings or redirection of funding to benefit dependent children.

Model Court participants agree that improved permanency planning for victims of child abuse and neglect holds the potential for significant government cost savings or redirection of funding to benefit dependent children.

Realistic goal setting

At the beginning of the Child Victims Project, many Model Court participants

envisioned sweeping, immediate changes in court policies and practices. As project efforts continue, participants increasingly are recognizing the need for attainable improvements and realistic goal-setting. Model Court judges, agency personnel, service providers and attorneys together are taking small steps toward improved practice in child abuse and neglect cases. Under the guidance of Child Victims Project staff, these short-term goals are allowing court systems to design and work toward consequent long-term improvements. These designated Model Courts now are effectively moving toward true systemic improvement in dependency policies and practices.

For example, Miami Model Court participants determined that immediate, comprehensive change in the face of an overwhelming caseload was impossible. The Model Court then began with a small pilot project to identify case processing inhibitors and structure change within a controlled setting. The Model Court in Tucson also has initiated a pilot project with plans to expand court improvements to the entire jurisdiction within six months.

Newark's Model Court determined that the establishment of a new one judge/one

family system was essential to improving its dependency process. The Model Court in Nashville is placing great emphasis on the development and implementation of training for front-line workers and facilitators in alternative resolution of cases, including mediation and family group conferencing.

Directed efforts

Using realistically set goals, Model Courts continue to move toward systemic change. With the inspiration and guidance of Lead Judges, diverse professionals are being engaged in the project, barriers are being identified and eliminated, and innovations are being put into place.

In Salt Lake City, prosecution and defense attorneys initially struggled with new calendaring procedures. The attorneys proposed a new concept to judges who enthusiastically agreed to using individual “teams” comprised of a prosecuting attorney, a child’s attorney, and a contract parent’s attorney. As a result, calendar conflicts are now minimal and cases are heard promptly without undue continuances.

In Chicago, parents’ difficulties in accessing services was quickly recognized

and a new Resource Center was put into place at the court house. Caseworkers can now go directly to the Resource Center with parents immediately following a hearing to help them arrange appointments, evaluations or classes.

In Reno, judges, attorneys, and agency personnel together addressed the County Commission with the need to increase resources for abused and neglected children. Through these interdisciplinary, cooperative efforts, additional allocations were made available to fund increased attorneys, caseworkers, and court personnel.

Data collection and measurement

Nearly all 10 Model Courts continue to struggle with antiquated or non-existent data collection systems. And nearly all project participants agree on the importance of adequate tracking, calendaring, and monitoring of each case before the court. Several courts are in the process of re-evaluating data collection and retrieval procedures, and, with Child Victims Project staff assistance, continue to make progress in information management. Most Model Courts presently are engaged in determining the status of their computerized systems and in developing baseline

improvements. Model Court participants are particularly interested in their ability to demonstrate increased timeliness in case processing, cost savings, and increased efficiency in case monitoring and tracking.

Project future

The interim information contained in this Child Victims Project Model Courts Status Report provides a brief look at progress which continues on a daily basis. Achievement of both short and long-term goals will again be examined in a Second Annual

Model Courts Status Report to be published in 1998. In the meantime, updated information on activities in all Model and Observer Courts is available from the:

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Permanency Planning for Children
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Performance Measurements

WHEN assessing court improvement, it is helpful to draw upon established quality assurance measures used both in public agencies and in private business to develop performance measures. These can be categorized in four general areas: capacity; process; products; and outcome measures.

- **Capacity:** Assuring the capacity to provide an acceptable level of service. Can include court and staff knowledge and experience in the dependency/child abuse and neglect arena, numbers and workloads of judicial officers and staff, use of alternative dispute resolution and diversion activities, and types of available services.
- **Process:** Assuring that the efforts conform to accepted standards of good practice. Can include a focus on front-loading the court process, more complete and thorough hearings, efficiency and “user-friendliness,” a one-family/one-judge hearing system, improved time lines, planning activities, and “due process.”
- **Products:** Includes two areas. First, assuring that there are tangible protocols, curricula, legislation, or other measures to help institutionalize improvements. Secondly, assuring that the resources being committed are directed to identified needs; i.e., that a needed service is accessible and available in the community for the intended consumers (or that reallocated budget funds are directed toward activities that will improve court practice in tangible ways).
- **Outcome measures:** Assuring that actions taken have the intended effect for children and families. Can include length of time children are in placement, reduction in the number of placements, satisfactory in-home services or returns home, and effective use of adoption and other alternatives to achieve permanent placements for children.

For a court to measure its performance in these four ways, a dual approach is necessary. First, an acceptable minimum performance must be met by addressing safety issues and

meeting statutory requirements. Second, optimal performance should be encouraged through innovative programs, new processes and systems change. Both are critical to achieving a high performance court.

At the beginning of the project, many of the Model Courts faced barriers in addressing the first concern: performance was below minimum because of failure to adhere to statutory guidelines. There was lack of collaboration among key players; and a failure to allocate needed services, staff, and attention to address the basics of the dependency system. To date, all the Model Courts are setting guidelines to achieve and to monitor minimum performance levels for good practice. The courts are also identifying quality enhancement measures.

Examples of the Model Court changes being made in each performance area are set forth below. Further improvements are outlined in the detailed descriptions of each court. The enhancement changes set forth below are jurisdiction-specific. However, many of the substantive ideas can be utilized by other courts seeking to improve basic dependency practice and implement meaningful change.

In making improvements affecting court capacity:

- The Hamilton County Juvenile Court, working with the social service agency,

mental health agency, and service providers, established a non-profit management organization to coordinate services for multiple needs children and families.

- The Essex County Juvenile Court in Newark increased solicitation efforts to interest more volunteers in the Child Placement Review Boards. As a result, additional Review Boards are being established with a goal of having cases heard more frequently.
- A special department was created within the Office of the Public Defender in Cook County, Chicago, to encourage experienced people to remain as dependency advocates.
- Many of the Model Courts, including Salt Lake City, Chicago, Nashville, and El Paso, are working toward diverting cases into alternative resolution procedures, such as mediation or family group conferencing, thus freeing court time for faster resolution of contested cases.

Several courts have made process improvements:

- The Dade County Juvenile Court in Miami allocated specific calendar time to address a backlog of contested termination of parental rights hearings and to improve staffing procedures to assure

timely case processing.

- The Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court in Alexandria set aside specific days and times for hearing dependency matters and now suspends other hearings to adhere to the new timetable; dependency hearings are held without delay.
- In the Pilot Project court in the Pima County Juvenile Court, Tucson, the parties and their attorneys meet prior to hearings, during which protocol stipulations are made and issues resolved. This results in fewer contested issues and more expeditious hearings.
- The attorneys and CASA volunteers in the 3rd Judicial District Court in Salt Lake City proposed a change in representation of parties so that a team serves each judge/courtroom. This proposal, enthusiastically endorsed by the judges, allows each court to operate independently without delays caused by calendar conflicts of attorneys.

Product improvements by the Model Courts have resulted in legislation, court rules, and organizational changes. These improvements are often the most difficult and time-consuming to finalize; the results can often be replicated by other courts and applied consistently even when judges or personnel change. Courts which have made

measurable product improvements include:

- Legislation in Ohio has changed the time lines for hearings and permanency decisions for the Hamilton County Juvenile Court in Cincinnati.
- Judges from the 3rd Judicial District Court in Salt Lake City worked with legislators over the past three years to change the laws regarding hearings, standards of proof, and presumptions in dependency cases.
- The Child Protection Division of the Cook County Circuit Court in Chicago is establishing a resource center at the courthouse to serve families after each hearing by helping to schedule appointments and to establish services ordered by the court.
- The Family Division of the 2nd Judicial District Court in Reno established a Family Drug Court. Parents are diverted from the criminal justice system into an intensive year-long program of recovery and services, aimed at safe reunification with their children.

Outcome measurements are divided into two separate areas: those of direct benefit to individual clients (i.e., children and families) and those with impact on the entire population of abused or neglected children in foster care and their families. Courts which have made improvements in the last

year, with measurable outcomes directly benefitting children and families include:

- The 3rd Judicial District Court in Salt Lake City established an intensive effort to reduce the number of children in care without a permanent plan; permanent plans were established for 700 children in this effort.
- The 65th Judicial District Court in El Paso worked with immigration attorneys and Immigration and Naturalization Service officers to provide documentation to 491 children in substitute care, avoiding the threat of deportation for these children.
- The Dade County Juvenile Court in Miami reduced the number of cases under court supervision from 2600 to 1800, with the remaining cases reviewed and scheduled for work-up. In addition, an intensive effort to reduce the backlog in contested hearings for termination of parental rights resulted in closure of 237 cases and expedited hearings set for the remaining 347 cases.
- The Child Protection Division of the Cook County Circuit Court in Chicago targeted cases open but no longer in need of close supervision and reduced the number of open child protection cases by 10,000.

All the Model Courts have achieved systemic improvement through the establishment of collaborative working groups. In many cases, close collaboration among the court, agency, and attorneys had not been tried before. Increased collaboration is seen as a primary benefit of this Model Court project and an essential element in systemic change. Courts also have made other improvements with outcomes affecting the environment of dependency and child protection, including:

- The Family Division of the 2nd Judicial District Court in Reno, which is working toward revising the child protection system to provide a continuum of care — from community resource-sharing and improved service accessibility to integrated and seamless case management for families in need.
- The Hamilton County Juvenile Court in Cincinnati, which has established a new working relationship with 24 counties in three states to improve the ability of each county to find adoptive homes for children freed for adoption.
- The Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court in Alexandria, which has fostered an open line of communication between the police department and the social service agency to allow discussion of potentially harmful situations to

be investigated prior to injury or harm to a child.

Project Future

Each Model Court has established goals for the coming year. Training and technical assistance visits have been scheduled for courts interested in specific areas of improvement. A summit meeting of all Model Court Lead Judges will be held in October 1997. This meeting will provide judges and other project participants an opportunity to share ideas for improvement and solutions for challenges facing each court.

The interim information contained in this booklet represents the first progress report of the Child Victims Project Model Courts. Project achievements will again be examined in a second annual Model Courts Status Report to be published in 1998. It is hoped that other courts interested in making improvements in the dependency process will contact the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges to obtain support for planned improvements. Updated

information on all court activities is available from the:

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Permanency Planning for Children
Project
University of Nevada, Reno
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The chart on the following two pages outlines many major goals set and improvements made in the Model Courts. It does not list all of them. The improvements listed may fit into more than one of the performance measures. Reforms are jurisdiction-specific and have been developed in response to the needs and current practice in each court system. Model Courts have been at work on reform for varying time periods — some for several years, and some for several months. As such, the following chart is not meant as a comparison, but is instead a statement of current accomplishments and goals in each Model Court.

*Current
Accomplishments
and Goals
of
Child Victims
Project
Model Courts*

	COLLABORATIVE MEETINGS: COURT/AGENCY/ ADVOCATES	CALENDAR IMPROVEMENTS	REMOVAL THROUGH INITIAL (SHELTER) HEARING	ADJUDICATION THROUGH PERMANENCY HEARINGS	POST PERMANENCY HEARING	ALTERNATIVES TO COURT HEARINGS
ALEXANDRIA	Held routinely to exchange information	One judge/one family; set time for hearings	Early substantive hearing five days from removal. New legislation provides adjudication at 5-day hearing or within 30 days	PP hearing at 12 months from disposition under new legislation		
CHICAGO	Regular meetings; umbrella workgroup of 5 key players meet regularly to discuss solutions	One family/one judge; Goal: staggered call	Goal: court-family conference w/in 60 days of removal; Goal: early substantive hearing	Goal: PP hearing at 12 months; Goal: expedited TPR procedure in egregious cases	Goal: implement subsidized guardianship option	Goal: non-litigation conferences to resolve disputes without court hearing
CINCINNATI	Held on a regular schedule	One family/one judge; set times for hearings	Early substantive hearing	Strict timelines observed; PP hearings at 12 months	Goal: expedited TPR process; adoption projects in progress	Case staffing; family conference
EL PASO	Regular meetings and training held for all service providers and attorneys	One family/one judge; set times for hearings	Early substantive hearings; triage foster homes for assessment of services	Substantive hearings held often; PP hearing at 12 months; review hearings via teleconference	Goal: increase subsidized guardianship options	Goal: mediation
MIAMI	Change Management Team working with interagency workgroups	Goal: move 18-month PP hearing from Citizen Review Panel to judge	Goal: begin implementing Resource Guidelines hearings on limited cases	Goal: conduct PP hearing within 12 months; Goal: expedite TPR in egregious cases	TPR backlog project in process	Mediation in all cases before TPR hearing; mediation considered before initial hearing
NASHVILLE	Collaborative efforts used to identify court improvement goals	One judge/one family	Early substantive hearings; targeting services for drug/mental health	Goal: PP hearing by 12 months; expediting TPR petitions	Improving foster care/PP review hearings	Increasing use of mediation and family group conferencing
NEWARK	Goal: establish multidisciplinary steering committee	Goal: change calendaring system to enforce one judge/one family	Goal: provide substantive hearing w/in one week of removal	Goal: PP hearing by 12 months		
RENO	Active technical working group recommends goals and priorities	One judge/one family; hearings rescheduled to allow more time	Integrated case manager works on multiple need cases; early substantive hearing	Regular reviews; Goal: legislation to shorten time for permanency hearing	Increased efforts for adoption of special needs children	
SALT LAKE CITY	Collaboration resulted in "teams" established to service each court	One family/one judge; time certain hearings; Goal: pre-trial at 9 months	Shelter hearing w/in 72 hours; extended hearing from 5 min. to 30-40 min.; agency/ family meeting before hearing	Strict timelines for hearings; recommended PP hearing at 9 months for infants	Goal: develop plan for use of mediation and family group conferencing	
TUCSON	Multi-disciplinary team was established in the fall of 1996 and continues to meet on a quarterly basis. A smaller steering committee meets every two weeks to work through problems	One judge/one family, time certain hearings, and no continuance policy implemented on 1/1/97. Beginning 8/1/97 the judges will alternate dependency/delinquency weeks	Pilot project: Pre-hearing meetings to resolve uncontested issues; preliminary protective substantive hearings will be heard within 5-8 days from removal	Goal: PP hearing no later than 12 months with minimum reviews every 6 months	Court reviews minimum of every six months	Goal: Mediation and family group conferencing. Working with AG to improve mediation program and mandatory settlement conferences in all contested cases

NOTICE/ SERVICE TO PARENTS	COUNSEL FOR PARENTS	COUNSEL/ GUARDIAN FOR CHILDREN	TRAINING	MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS	ADDRESSING BACKLOGS	OTHER IMPROVEMENTS
Orders in case given to parents at time of hearing; Goal: improve diligent search	Appointed when case is filed, avoiding delays	Improved GAL appointment for life of case; GAL gives court regular reports	Improved CASA training	Working with State Court Administrator to improve case tracking		
Goal: improve diligent search	Appointed early in case	Appointed	Increase training on guardianships and adoptions and for implementation of new legislation	Goal	Already decreased numbers of children in care; Goal: address backlog of TPR petitions	Goal: court-based resource center for immediate access to services
Orders given to parents at time of hearing	Appointed at first hearing if qualify	Social worker GAL appointed; if abuse case, attorney GAL appointed	Training in use of new software program within 12 months; standards to be set for training of GALs	Improved tracking software to be installed in 3-6 months allowing judges to input and access information from the bench	Study being done on children in long-term foster care and on reactivated cases	FCF Management, Inc. established as managed care system for multiple need children/families
	Rarely, unless parent is incapacitated or at TPR; Goal	Attorney appointed	Goal: training and protocol for GALs	Goal: case tracking and management	Pro-bono attorneys used to address backlog in documentation of children	Teen summit of foster care teens; active foster parent program and participation
Goal: improve diligent search procedures	Appointed at beginning of case; pursuing continuity of legal counsel	GAL appointed via state guidelines; attorney when appropriate	Topics selected by Change Management Team	Goal: analyze current systems and determine linkages and improvements	Intensive TPR case management to avert backlogs; hearings by General Master to regularly review relative placements	Improved response to family violence, related criminal cases and substance-exposed newborns/siblings
	Goal: appoint counsel prior to first hearing	Goal: appoint counsel prior to first hearing	Increase training in family group conferencing and mediation	Enhance system to provide standard reports, scheduling and tracking		Court involvement in recruitment of adoption and foster homes
	May be appointed from Public Defender office	Litigated cases: attorney appointed for children		Tracking system; Goal: continue improvements		Foster care review boards and CASA volunteers active
	Goal: institute program for appointment of counsel for indigent parents	Attorney appointed at first hearing	Goal: provide additional training for foster parents	Goal: improved case tracking and scheduling system		Family Drug Court works with drug/alcohol impaired parents to achieve reunification or permanency
	Attorney appointed prior to first hearing; part of court team	Attorney appointed at removal	Goal: interdisciplinary training on options & services available		Intensive effort resulted in complete elimination of backlog of children in care over 18 months without permanent plan in 1995.	Goal: conduct PP hearing at 9 months; legislative changes have set strict timelines and responsibilities
Standard notices and orders drafted for pilot project; parent given court date for PP hearing and attorney assignment at the time of service of the temporary custody notice. Goal: full court implementation by April 1998	Attorney appointed for all parents at time of delivery of the temporary custody notice	Attorney appointed at the time of the delivery of the temporary custody notice	Interdisciplinary training provided to improve court/agency collaboration on a quarterly basis	Court is using the JCATS system from Canyon Software for data collection during the model project. Goal: improved data collection and data retrieval systems on main frame computer in statewide system	Backlog identified through FFK cases. More active judicial involvement through more frequent reviews and TPR trials with no continuances	Pilot project in two courtrooms to identify needs and barriers to full implementation. Full time staff provided to coordinate project. Treatment services provided to model court cases on accelerated basis

NOTES

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