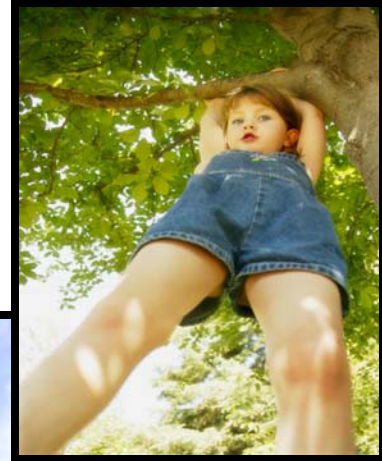


NEVADA'S
COURT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
FOR THE PROTECTION AND PERMANENCY
OF DEPENDENT CHILDREN

ANNUAL TRAINING ASSESSMENT REPORT
DECEMBER 2010



NEVADA SUPREME COURT
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS



COURT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM MISSION, PURPOSE, AND GOALS STATEMENT

"The Court Improvement Program is a multidisciplinary project which seeks improvement of interrelated systems that serve children and families who enter the child welfare system. The program operates through team-oriented court and agency initiatives. The goal of the CIP is to make the systems more effective."

NEVADA'S COURT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM ANNUAL TRAINING ASSESSMENT REPORT DECEMBER 2010

The Nevada Court Improvement Program (CIP) is pleased to submit this 2010 Program Assessment Report for the Basic CIP Grant for the period October 1, 2009, to September 30, 2010.

The State Court Improvement Program was created as part of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993. The grants were designed to help state courts assess their foster care and adoption laws and judicial processes, and to develop and implement a plan for system improvements. Since then, the CIP has been reauthorized three times: in 1997, under the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) reauthorized through 2001; in 2001, under the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Act of 2001 (P.L. 107-133) reauthorized through 2006; in 2006, under the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-288) reauthorized through FY 2011.

CIP has existed in Nevada since 1995 and is overseen by the multi-disciplinary CIP Select Committee (Committee), which is chaired by Supreme Court Justice Nancy Saitta. This group is comprised of family court judges, a tribal court judge, the three child welfare agency administrators, a deputy state attorney general, a legislator, the director of the Administrative Office of the Courts, a public defender active in child welfare, several attorneys who actively represent neglected and abused children, and the executive director of the Nevada CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) Association, Inc. As a standing committee of the Judicial Council of the State of Nevada, the Committee serves in an advisory capacity.

Strategy T1: Provide Opportunities for Stakeholders to Keep Current on Education and Training

T1.1 was accomplished. CIP funded four people, including Justice Nancy Saitta, to attend the 2009 Victims Act Model Courts All-Site Conference in October 2009.

In March 2010, Assemblywoman Debbie Smith, a CIP Select Committee member, was funded to attend the 2010 Spring National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators (NAPCWA) Conference where she learned more about how students who are in the child welfare system are identified, tracked, and helped. She is going to use this information to ensure that Nevada's new longitudinal data system (SAIN) has the capability to identify information about students related to their involvement in the child welfare system.

In April 2010, Judge Michael Gibbons, from the 9th Judicial District, was funded to attend the 3rd Annual Nevada State CASA Association Conference where the focus was on meeting the needs of children who are in the jurisdiction of the district courts in dependency cases.

Karen Palmer, the child advocacy attorney for Washoe Legal Services, received funding to attend the 2010 Child Advocacy Institute in May 2010. She learned how to properly and most effectively advocate for clients in the dependency arena. She learned how to conduct direct and cross examinations of both lay and expert witnesses. She felt that the trial skills she learned will help her more effectively provide the children with a voice in the legal proceedings.

Jennifer Rains, Deputy Washoe County Public Defender, was funded to attend the NADCP (National Association of Drug Court Professionals) 16th Annual Drug Court Training Conference in June 2010. The conference is designed to provide a legal basis for specialty courts, as well as best practices and innovations. She returned with ideas to improve Nevada's child welfare system. Trauma-informed care is the new hot topic in providing services to individuals dealing with mental health and substance abuse issues. A study of the Tucson, Arizona family drug court found that parents provided trauma-informed counseling services had a higher rate of reunification with their children compared to parents who received substance abuse counseling alone.

Judge Steel, from the 8th Judicial District, received CIP funding to attend Beyond the Bench 20: Collaboration Works! in June 2010. This is California's premiere multi-disciplinary event for juvenile dependency and delinquency professionals.

T1.2, appointing a CIP member to work with Youth Advisory Board, was not accomplished. Justice Saitta intends to ask for a volunteer at the January 7, 2011 CIP Select Committee meeting.

T1.3 was not accomplished because no foster youth requested a scholarship to attend the national conference sponsored by the National Resource Center.

T1.4 was accomplished. In October 2009, four people (Justice Saitta, Judge Steel, Tom Morton, Diane Comeaux and Sheryl Overstreet) were funded to attend the 3rd Judicial Leadership Summit in Austin, Texas where they developed an action plan for the upcoming year. The action plan focused on collaborative efforts to improve the timeliness and appropriateness of permanency planning for children and youth.

T1.5 was accomplished. Five people were funded to attend both the Children's Bureau Data and Technology Conference and the CIP Annual meeting in July 2010. The Data Conference highlighted successful data integration and the process of combining data from various sources to provide users with a clear and unified perspective of complex issues.

Strategy T2: Develop, Implement and Support Continuing Education Programs and Materials for Judges and Juvenile Masters on Child Welfare Issues

T2.1 was accomplished. CIP did collaborate with AOC Judicial Education Unit to identify training priorities.

T2.2 developing “nutshell” dependency training was modified by the CIP Select Committee in June 2010 to make available brief training modules or benchcards as needed.

T2.3, adapting “nutshell” modules as refreshers courses was abandoned by the CIP Select Committee in June 2010.

T2.4 was accomplished. In March 2010, several sessions related to the dependency issues were presented at the Family Law Judges conference. *Immigrants and the Family Court* focused on custody issues, deportation, family destabilization and the rights of children of immigrant families. Judge T. Arthur Ritchie analyzed and led a discussion of recent important family law decisions including child welfare issues. In April 2010, at the Nevada District Judges Conference there was an optional “Family Court Breakout” facilitated by Victor Schulze II, Esq., Senior Deputy Nevada Attorney General.

T2.5, send up to two judicial officers of Child Abuse and Neglect Institute, was not accomplished. Although CIP published this conference on its website, no one requested sponsorship to attend.

Strategy T3: Develop, Implement and Support Continuing Education Programs and Materials for Court Staff on Child Welfare Issues

T3.1, identify training needs in this arena. None were identified.

T3.2, update training, was not done.

T3.3, provide training to court staff, was not accomplished as the CIP Select Committee began shifting its focus due to fiscal constraints. More court staff training will be conducted using distance learning techniques. CIP will explore its options as this new methodology evolves.

Strategy T4: Develop and Implement collaborative multi-disciplinary training

T4.1 was not accomplished. The CIP Select Committee decided, in January 2010, not to hold any conferences this year with the intent to hold a statewide “Focus on Kids” conference during fiscal year 2011.

T4.2, appropriate funds for local pilot projects, was accomplished. Training grant funds were used to partially fund the Early Resolution Project, the Surrogate Education Advocacy Program and the Safety Team Facilitator. Progress for each of the sub-grants and projects are fully explained in the 2010 Annual Assessment Report for the Basic Grant

T4.3, assist with funding of the annual statewide CASA conference, was not accomplished as CIP did not receive a request for assistance.

T4.4, develop and present training on improving representation of parents, including trial skills, was expanded to improving the entire dependency process. A conference topic planning committee was appointed on September 24, 2010. This committee has met and has begun developing key topics with the focus of improving the entire process.

Strategy T5: Support Training and Education for Specific Groups of Stakeholders

T5.1, Develop training programs and materials for stakeholders, was accomplished.

Surrogate Education Advocacy Program

The Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada's Surrogate Education Advocacy program (SEAP) provides support to children in the foster care system who need educational surrogates to act as a "parent" to request special education evaluations, identify children with disabilities, and ensure that children with disabilities are provided with a free and appropriate public education as required by Federal law.

The targeted goals for this year included recruiting and training more volunteer surrogates and updating the training materials more effectively prepare surrogates to advocate for their children. SEAP also forged a stronger alliance with both the Special Education Program and the Children's Attorney Project to enable them to identify more children needing surrogates.

As a result, between March 1 and August 31, 2010, an additional 36 surrogates were recruited and trained. Each new surrogate attended two mandatory trainings – one on the evaluation/IEP process and one on behavioral interventions, disciplinary rights, and procedures.

During February and March 2010, seven surrogate trainings on the IEP process and behavioral and disciplinary rights and procedures were offered and were attended by 24 new surrogates. During August 2010, two trainings on *Preparing for a Successful 2010-2011 School Year for Your Child* were offered and were attended by 12 new surrogates.

T5.2, and T5.3, developing DVD video trainings for foster parents and youths in foster care were abandoned by the CIP Select Committee in June 2010 in favor of encouraging local jurisdictions to determine their own unique needs.

T5.4, appropriate funds for local projects relating to improving post adoption services, was modified to funding local programs to improve areas as early representation and timeliness to adoption.

Safety Team Facilitator – Adrienne Cox

The Early Resolution Project (ERP) is in its second year of attempting to transform the early stages of the court process for abused and neglected children into what has been called “therapeutic jurisprudence” or “collaborative law.” The juvenile court system has historically been buffeted by the contradicting values and methods of law and social work. The two disciplines focus through very different ethical prisms; the adversarial ethic of legal process and protection versus the rehabilitative and care ethic of social work. Additionally, social workers and attorneys rarely share the same professional language, ethical precepts or world view.

The goal of the ERP Safety Team Facilitation Project is to incorporate a trained facilitator in the initial interdisciplinary ERP Safety Team meetings; thus enabling the Safety Team members to expeditiously gather information and determine what additional information is needed, while ensuring the safety of the child. To best accomplish this goal, the facilitator planned 5 trainings for the Safety Team members. The first one was conducted on September 30, with 25 participants. It covered the start up of the Early Resolution Program, Facilitated Petition Program, ERP program operations, and an overview of Team Decision Making.

Four additional trainings are planned. The next one will be October 12, Launching ERP, including roles and responsibilities and program operations is planned to be presented. Terri Keener will provide Team Decision Making to the facilitator and to child welfare staff not involved in ERP on October 13, 2010. The November 9, 2010 training will outline the processes about scheduling Safety Teams, Court's role at Protective Custody Hearings, and incarcerated parents. The December 14, 2010 training will discuss expanding ERP to other geographical zones, eligibility criteria, and program adjustments.

ABA Bar- Youth Empowerment Project Judicial Bench Cards

In February 2010, these bench cards were mailed to all judges and hearing masters who hear NRS 432b cases.

On-going Court Improvement Activities

Training grant funding is used to fund portions of the two CIP staff support positions, CIP Coordinator and Assistant. Among the CIP Coordinator activities funded are maintaining and update the strategic training plan and implementation of the strategic training plan in collaboration with child welfare and court stakeholders. Also funded is planning, facilitating, and implementing various trainings across the State. These include training the several District Court judges on the expectations and process of the Community Improvement Council, assisting sub-grant applicants for training opportunities, approving funding support for attendance at appropriate trainings, attending appropriate trainings, herself, and staffing

the CIP Select Committee's Conference Planning Committee, as well as planning and implementing the statewide CIP conference.

The CIP Assistant supports such training endeavors as the statewide CIP conference, CASA trainings, AOC Judicial Education efforts in the area of child welfare (including the Family Law Specialty Court Conferences), and stakeholder attendance at appropriate trainings.