



Court Improvement Program

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Watch for New Training on CIP Website

In the next **3** months, CIP will be releasing the following trainings on the CIP website:

“Understanding and Using Data Available to You: Chapin Hall’s Foster Care Data Archive” designed for anyone working in the child dependency system interested in understanding how to access and use administrative data to improve the process, including the judiciary and child welfare staff.

“Trauma and Child Protection Mediation” designed for dependency mediators, GALs/CASAs, attorneys practicing in the child dependency system.

“Domestic Violence in Dependency Mediation” designed to provide a domestic violence 101 introduction for dependency mediators, child welfare staff, GALs/CASAs, and the judiciary. This course also discusses how to mediate cases involving domestic violence and how to screen for domestic violence.

“Basics of Representing Children in Abuse and Neglect Cases” designed especially for children’s attorneys, but also a good foundation for child welfare workers and GALs/CASAs

For Additional Training Information Contact:
Kathie Malzahn-Bass
kmalzahn-bass@nvcourts.nv.gov

The courts can contact Alicia Summers
for additional data help at:
alicia.d.summers@gmail.com

Ninety Gathered in Reno to Focus on a New Vision for the Child Dependency System



After hearing each of the 11 judicial districts report on their successes implementing their 2018 CIC Action Plans, David Kelly, JD, MA, gave the opening keynote address for the 2019 Community Improvement Council Summit (CIC). Mr. Kelly oversees the Children's Bureau's work with the courts and the legal community, including the Court Improvement Programs and the National Child Welfare Capacity Building Center for Courts. He observed that the work done in Nevada is unprecedented. He has seen nothing like the CICs and the Summit in any other state. He was "blown away" by the outstanding quality of the CICs' work.

David Kelly explained that the Children's Bureau is reimagining a new direction for child welfare. One, in which, rather than removing children from their homes, the places they know and those they love after they have already been neglected and abused; we, instead, focus on causes rather than effects, cures rather than symptoms, prevention rather than treatment. What if we help the

whole child, the whole family, the whole community and those who support them to thrive, he asked.

We know that the current system is not working. How? We have 443,000 children in foster care and 4 million reports of neglect and abuse each year. Sixty percent (60%) of those children in foster care are there because of neglect, not abuse. The new vision is to commit to keeping vulnerable families together, invest in the children's own families to keep them safely in their own homes. Mr. Kelly explained that, as a system, we are paying therapy to cure the damage being done by removal.

Instead, the new vision supports families across systems, mitigates vulnerability, enhances protective factors, and makes sure that children and families have the basic concrete supports to keep them strong and allow them to thrive. Mr. Kelly concluded that Nevada's outstanding work sets it well on the path to embracing this new vision.

For a video clip explaining the new vision, copy the link below into your browser:

<https://vimeo.com/338077801>

New Focus of Next CIP 5-Year Plan: Quality Legal Representation

The Program Instructions for the upcoming 5-year CIP Strategic Plans will require all CIPs to have a quality legal representation project. In anticipation, the Nevada State Team while attending the National State Team meeting decided to explore the possibility of designing a preventive legal advocacy project in Clark County to prevent children from entering foster care.

CIP contracted with Vivek Sankaran, Clinical Professor at the University of Michigan Law School, and Christo-

pher Church, Staff Attorney for the University of South Carolina Law School Clinics, to guide Clark County stakeholders through the project design process. Alicia Summers, Ph.D., will conduct a baseline study of representation throughout Nevada's dependency system including CASA/GAL and develop data collection tools to implement at the inception of the Project. The expectation is that this pilot will also be adaptable in other judicial districts.

Statewide Juvenile Dependency Mediation Evaluation Measurement of Success Focuses on Addressing Needs

Across the country, the focus of assessing the performance of dependency mediation programs has shifted. No longer is the primary interest whether mediations simply come to agreement. Research is now focused on the more complex issues of whether the program is serving the needs of children in the child dependency system, mediation participants and other stakeholders (including judges, hearing masters, attorneys and child welfare workers), as well as enhancing family member experience with the court system. Additionally, it is essential that the appropriate cases and adequate numbers of cases be referred to mediation.

During the 2019 Summit, Alicia Summers, Ph.D., presented some of the major findings of the latest JDMP study. The Program is functioning well with over 400 referrals since inception in July 2016. However, the focus of the majority of the mediations remain at the Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) phase of the case. To better, achieve some of the Program’s goals such as parental engagement; ordering mediation at the front end of the case works best.

Nonetheless, an assessment of what stakeholders hope mediation to achieve strongly correlated with actual mediation outcomes. Eighty-three percent of the stakeholders hoped that families feel they have a voice in the process; while 97% of the families felt that they had a chance to voice their opinion and 91% believed people listened to what they said. Ninety-four percent of the stakeholders hoped that families feel a part of the decision-making process; and 94% of the families believe they were able to be part of finding answers to problems discussed.

Concerning mediation outcomes at the TPR stage: 70% of mediated cases resulted in post-adoption contact compared with only 10% of non-mediated cases. Relinquishment of parental rights followed 57% of mediated TPR cases; compared to relinquishment in only 31% of non-mediated TPR cases. Sixty-nine percent of the stakeholders perceived that mediation reduced their workload, with another 16% believing it had no impact on their workload. Forty-seven percent (47%) of mediations resulted in a hearing being vacated resulting in substantial court savings.

Since the Program has shown an almost universal positive impact and no negative impacts on cases sent to mediation, the study concludes that the Program and the courts should continue to increase the number of cases ordered to mediation earlier in their life so more families can benefit from the process.

Celebration of Kathie and Robbie

During the 2019 Summit, the Judges and CICs surprised Kathie and Robbie with heartfelt expressions of appreciation as the pair move toward retiring in January. Each CIC ensured that Kathie and Robbie always remembers them by plying them with delightful banter and mementoes from their regions.



