



Court Improvement Program

Community Improvement Councils News

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Outstanding Work of the Nevada CICs Draws Special Guest to 2019 CIC Summit

David P. Kelly, JD, MA, who oversees the U.S. Children's Bureau's work with courts and the legal community, including the State and Tribal Court Improvement Programs will be attending the CIC Summit this year. David will share information about the need to balance the evidence in child welfare to help focus on what families need to avoid the damage, rather than regarding parents as needing "fixing".

Prior to joining the federal government, David was an Assistant Staff Director at the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law and a Senior Assistant Child Advocate at the New Jersey Office of the Child Advocate. He began his career as a staff attorney at the Youth Advocacy Center of Covenant House New Jersey where he represented homeless, runaway and at-risk youth on a variety of legal matters and led the organization's policy initiatives, he later became the Center's Director of Legal and Clinical services.

The Children's Bureau advises the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF) on matters related to child welfare, including child abuse and neglect, child protective services, family preservation and support, adoption, foster care, and independent living. The office recommends legislative and budgetary proposals, operational planning system objectives, and areas for evaluation, research, and demonstration activities.

David was involved in the creation of Family First Prevention Services Act and the newest Children's Bureau initiative, the nationwide call to action on adoption. As such, he is in a unique position to help the CICs develop their 2020 Action Plans.

Community Improvement Council Activities

The Community Improvement Councils have been diligently implementing their action plans to improve hearing quality and time to permanency.

- ◆ The 6th and 7th judicial districts (JD) have been working together on developing a guardian ad litem (GAL) program. They are identifying existing training opportunities to address the statutory training requirements, soliciting help to recruit volunteers, creating brochures for both potential GALs and youths explaining what to expect of a GAL, and outlining GAL program procedures.
- ◆ The 4th JD hosted a well-attended day-long ICWA training conducted by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.
- ◆ The 2nd and 8th JDs have solicited additional assistance from Christopher Church, JD to dig deeper into their administrative data to better understand their

“short-stayer” (less than 30 days out-of-home) population. The Washoe County Human Services Agency (WCHSA) has pulled additional data to try to understand why these children are returned home so quickly and what actions can be taken to reduce this population. WCHSA found that 55% of the short-stayers were removed after hours, 45% of the short-stayers parents were incarcerated. They are going to target those with no impending danger who are returned home in less than 14 days.

- ◆ The 5th and 8th JDs have been looking at how to utilize juvenile dependency mediation pre-petition.
- ◆ The 1st JD is using administrative data in the fostercourtimprovement.org website to begin to understand its re-entry rate and where to dig deeper into the locally available data.

A National Call to Action: Permanent Homes for Teenagers

On June 28, 2019, Jerry Milner, Associate Commissioner of the U.S. Children’s Bureau called the nation to action. He reported that 123,000 kids were awaiting adoption on the first day of FY 2016. Nearly 2,000 of those children were in Nevada. By the end of FY 2018, 271 of those 2,000 were still awaiting adoption and another 57 had aged out of the system. Youth, ages 15 to 17 years, linger in out-of-home care twice as long as younger children. Sadly, these young adults have an increased likelihood of being homeless, incarcerated, or suffering post-traumatic stress; and decreased opportunities for full employment and education.

Mr. Milner is asking that all child welfare systems focus on moving these teenagers into permanent, loving homes during the upcoming Adoption Month this November. An Adoption Summit is being convened in Washington D.C. on August 23, 2019. Teams from all states will learn about multi-level supports, national adoption partners,

and family finding techniques available at the federal level to build statewide capacity to better serve this population. Watch for more on this important undertaking in the months ahead.



Juvenile Dependency Mediation Program: Growing and Sustainable

With Sine Die on June 3, 2019, the 80th session of the Nevada Legislature closed and a new stronger Juvenile Dependency Mediation Program (JDMP) came under the Nevada Supreme Court's Budget. The Supreme Court requested and was awarded \$900,000 for the biennium to sustain the JDMP. The funding transition will be transparent to the courts and participants. What will be noticeable is the enhanced facilitative co-mediation model implemented after July 1st. For more complex cases involving a large number of participants, a lead and co-mediator will be assigned to the mediation. The lead mediator will contact parties, write the agreements, and complete the data sheets for CIP. Co-mediation benefits include:

- a better opportunity for parties to connect to a mediator and the process;
- an enhanced ability to try new techniques in which one mediator tries a technique and if it doesn't work the second can rescue, if necessary;
- the two mediators can divide and conquer if a party needs calming down, one mediator can manage that party while the other remains with the other parties;
- less chance of an impasse and increased likelihood of agreement because two mediators can think of more areas to explore than one.

To accomplish this, JDMP will conduct another 40-hour dependency mediation training July 8-12, 2019. Margaret Crowley will be training 12 new recruits for the dependency mediation panel. Behind the scenes, Vicki Elefante, an AOC Court Services Analyst, will be handling the administrative responsibilities: court order and case information intake, receipt and payment of mediator invoices, tracking of mediation data. Margaret will continue working with the mediators, scheduling and assigning cases, updating mediation protocols, and training stakeholders on when and how to successfully participate in mediations. A mediation newsletter will help keep stakeholders abreast of all these new developments.

JDMP, as it has always, provides mediation at any time a conflict arises in the life of a case. With the implementation of FFPSA, mediation will be available for families who have been identified as at risk, but have not yet been immersed in the child welfare system.

Exciting times are ahead. Should you have any questions, please contact Kathie Malzahn-Bass.

New and Updated Resources to Support Reunification of Families

Foster care provides support to families in need and seeks to increase the number of families working toward reunification. The resources below can help professionals and resource families get children, youth, and their families on the path to reunification.

Resources for Parents With Children and Youth in Out-of-Home Care / <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/outofhome/casework/parentcasework/parentresources/>

Reunification: Bringing your Children Home From Foster Care / <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/reunification/>

Reunifying Families / <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/permanency/reunification/>

Foster caregivers are expected to support the families of children under their care; however, this can be extremely challenging for both the family and the foster caregivers. A supportive agency culture can have a significant impact.

The new publication, *Partnering with Birth Parents to Promote Reunification* at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets-families-partnerships/>, features advice and insights from birth and foster parents to help dispel some of the myths each may hold about the other.

Note: Information above from the Child Welfare Information Gateway, copy and paste link to access.

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In 2010, each of the State's ten judicial districts created a Community Improvement Council (CIC) that focused on identifying barriers to timely permanent placement of children at risk. July 2015, the 11th JD was created. The CICs have been meeting regularly in their communities and at annual Summits where they have learned to interpret data specific to their districts, while creating strategies to reduce the amount of time that it takes to move cases involving children at risk through the court process. The overriding focus, in addition to the safety of the child, is to create an environment where the best decisions are made for each child.

**CIP Working for the Protection &
 Permanency of Dependent Children**
 Visit Our Web Site
<http://cip.nvcourts.gov>

For Judicial Districts' CIC Information Contact:

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