



Court Improvement Program

Community Improvement Councils News

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November is National Adoption Month

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National Adoption Month is an initiative of the Children's Bureau with a goal to increase national awareness and bring attention to the need for permanent families for children and youth in the U.S. foster care system. This year's National Adoption Month theme is "In Their Own Words: Lifting Up Youth Voices." The National Adoption Month microsite includes resources and tips to help the child welfare system develop and support opportunities for young people to effectively share their voices and perspectives. Their stories can inform recruitment practices, training resources for families, and other permanency support services. This year's website also contains resources designed specifically for youth, including how to get involved and ways to share their story effectively. Visit the 2018 National Adoption Month website for more information.

[2018 National Adoption Month website](https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/nam/)

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/nam/>

85 Join Together In Reno To Build A Foundation For Progress

Facilitated by Justice Nancy Saitta, Ret. and Justice Lidia Stiglich, District Court Judges from across the state gathered at the Judge's Round Table for the CIC Summit to discuss issues arising in their districts and how to comply with the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). During the next two days, 85 participants representing CIC teams from all 11 judicial districts came together to learn about and discuss changes to be made to lay a foundation for progress. Christopher Church, JD., Law and Policy Director of the Children's Law Center at the University of South Carolina, demonstrated how to navigate the Fostering Court Improvement web tool at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. He explained how these data can be used by the CICs to inform and foster progress in their districts. The FFPSA was re-

viewed and stakeholder groups discussed how they could best help comply with the new law. Each CIC received its own 2017 hearing quality study and statewide results were presented by Dr. Alicia Summers, Research Director of the federal Capacity Building Center for the Courts. The draft court order templates were shared by CIP Select Committee members Special Juvenile Master Kimberly Okezie and Carson City Deputy District Attorney Buffy Okuma. Margaret Crowley, Esq., administrator of the statewide Juvenile Dependency Mediation Program, discussed the next steps to improve the Program. All this information and these data were, then, melded by each CIC into an action plan for the upcoming year to help them continue progressing into the future.

Hard Work Pays Off: Nevada Courts Significantly Improve Handling of Dependency Cases

Since 2014, the dependency hearing quality in Nevada courts has dramatically improved explains the latest quality hearing study conducted by Alicia Summers, Ph.D. and Sophia Gatowski, Ph.D. The original 2014 study laid the baseline from which courts and their Community Improvement Councils (CICs) gauged progress.

Factors found to impact hearing quality included parties present, parties engaged by the judge, the discussion of relevant topics during hearings, findings on the report, the number of judges per case, and the number of continuances.

Significant increases between 2014 and 2017 were found in the presence of the father, child, and child's attorney at dependency hearings. The presence of other parties increased, but not as dramatically as those three. The judiciary stepped up its engagement with mothers, fathers, and children. For example, in 2014 judges explained the purpose of the hearing to only 38% of the fathers present, whereas, in 2017 judges explained the purpose to 70% of the fathers. Judges addressed the mother by name 90% of the time in 2017 compared to 75% in 2014. Thirty-one percent (31%) of the parents were asked if they had any questions in 2014. In 2017 63% of them were asked.

Of the topics that the Enhanced Resource Guidelines suggests be discussed in each hearing, discussion for the vast majority increased. Discussion of applicable topics increased from 47% in 2014 to 60% in 2017. Among those that most significantly increased were the child's placement, Native American heritage, diligent search, progress or compliance with case plans, adequacy or modifications of case plans, and 15 of 22 months/compelling reasons.

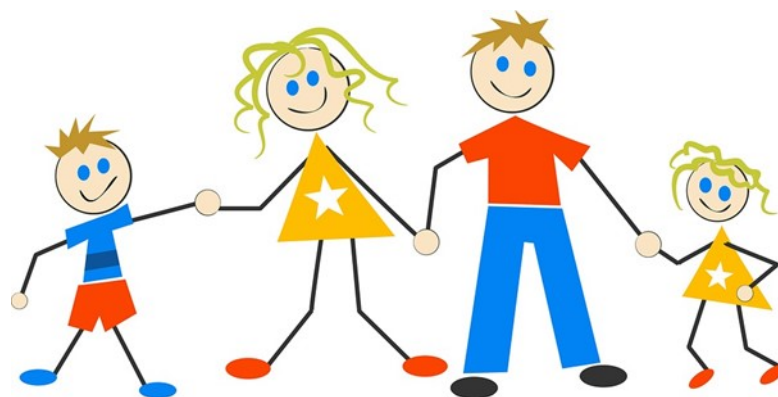
Not only are the courts doing a better job engaging parents and discussing relevant topics during the hearings, but they are putting findings on the record more frequently as well. Reasonable efforts findings were observed 71% of the time in 2017, but only 23% of the time in 2014. Two courts did so 100% of the time in 2017 and two more put reasonable efforts findings on the record 90% of the time.

Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) findings were observed 35% of the time in 2017 and only 6% of the time in 2014 statewide. One court put ICWA findings on the record 100% of the time in 2017. Another did so in 80% of the hearings.

What difference does all this make? These hearing quality factors are directly linked to outcomes for children. Time to permanency, for example, is reduced when the mother is engaged by the judge and in depth discussion takes place during the hearings around child safety and efforts to reunify. On the other hand, time to permanency increases when more judges hear the case and there are continuances.

The likelihood of reunification increases when the mother is present for the hearings across the life of the case, the judge addresses her by name, and there are sufficient discussions regarding child safety and efforts to reunify. Parents having the opportunity to be heard directly impacts children achieving permanency within 12 months.

The single factor linked to all outcomes – time to permanency, reunification, and permanency in less than 12 months – is the engagement of parties by the judge.



The Co-Occurrence of Child Maltreatment and Domestic Violence

A few months ago the Nevada Juvenile Dependency Mediation Program mediators were trained on how to handle domestic violence in the mediation setting. But how frequently does child abuse and neglect intersect with domestic violence? More often than we may think. Research suggests that nearly 30 million children in the United States will be exposed to some type of family violence before the age of 17, and there is a 30 to 60 percent overlap of child mal-

treatment and domestic violence.

Children may be harmed (either accidentally or intentionally when witnessing violence), or traumatized from experiencing domestic violence. These children are more likely than their peers to experience a wide range of difficulties, which can vary by age and developmental stage. These fall into three categories: behavioral, social, and emotional problems; cognitive and attitudinal problems;

and long-term problems like delinquency and substance use.

Learn more in the newly revised Children's Bureau field manual, **Child Protection in Families Experiencing Domestic Violence**, which reflects recent practice innovations, the latest research and data, and greater emphasis on family preservation and in-home services complementing the Family First Prevention Services Act.

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/domesticviolence2018/>

COMPARISON OF RELEVANT DEPENDENCY DATA ACROSS JUDICIAL DISTRICTS

Judicial District	Permanency Hearing within 1 year	Congregate Care Was 1 st Placement	Short Stayers/Home In	
			72 hours	30 Days
	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	
1 st JD	100	17	3.5	10
2 nd JD	97	26	8	20
3 rd JD	76	17	17	17
4 th JD	79	10	14	33
5 th JD	43	2	4	16
6 th JD	100	0	0	12
7 th JD	71	9	0	38
8 th JD	81	41	8	24
9 th JD	93	0	0	0
10 th JD	95	4	15	15
11 th JD	67	0	0	7
Statewide	85	36	11	23

Source: 2018 Data Summaries presented during 2018 CIC Summit

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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>

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