



Court Improvement Program

Community Improvement Councils News January-March 2017

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Save the Date

**2017 Community Improvement Council Summit
September 27-29, 2017**

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Plans for the Upcoming CIC Summit

Although the CIP Data and Training Grants have not been funded for FFY 2017, CIP plans to hold the annual CIC Summit in Reno. With assistance from the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, CIP conducted a post-Summit survey to ascertain the training needs of the CICs. Forty-four responded with the following results:

- ◆ Determining reasonable efforts 57.1%
- ◆ ICWA Regulations/Guidelines 57.7%
- ◆ Improving court practice 42.9%
- ◆ Examples of quality hearings 42.9%
- ◆ Engaging stakeholders to improve hearing process 42.9%
- ◆ Trauma and its impact 37.2%

These responses indicate that the CIC community's training interest remains focused on improving the hearing process and court practices.

Agreement Rate for Statewide Mediation: A Resounding 84%

Referrals to the Statewide Juvenile Dependency Mediation Program (JDMP) burgeoned during the third quarter of the year to 35, 4 of those had parties who did not show. Six mediations were ordered in the first quarter as the program was developing its processes. By the second quarter 20 mediations were ordered with 1 being cancelled because a party did not attend. Of the 31 mediations that were held during the third quarter, 27 of them came to agreement, which is an 87% agreement rate. Year to date, the program has conducted 56 mediations, 47 of which came to agreement resulting in an 84% agreement rate. Sixteen

more mediations have already been scheduled for the final quarter.

Clearly, the use of mediation is increasing and is successful. The 11th Judicial District has scheduled a mediation to be conducted the 4th quarter, leaving only two judicial districts that have yet to hold a dependency mediation.

Feedback from the confidential survey's collected at the end of each mediation session continues to be very positive often referring to the open and relaxed environment mediation offers. Stakeholders across the state are actively supportive of the mediation process as evidenced by this child welfare

supervisor's statement, "This program is very helpful. Saves time and resources."

**For More
Information
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Measurably Improving the Lives of Foster Children and Youth

Children in foster and kinship care deserve the same resources and opportunities for success as young people being raised by biological parents. Tragically, foster youth receive on average less than 50% of what the USDA reports the average American family spends on raising their children.

iFoster is a national non-profit that bridges the gap between youth in the child welfare system and the external corporations, foundations and government agencies who have the resources to help them succeed. iFoster has built the largest and most inclusive online community of young people, caregivers, and organizations in child welfare with over 40,000 members in all 50 states. On behalf of the community, iFoster negotiates and collaborates with hundreds of partners who can provide the resources, supports and opportunities that foster youth need to become successful adults.

Since its launch 5 years ago, iFoster has provided over \$50 Million of resources to its members for free or at deeply discounted prices. Resources range from ways to stretch dollars to cover daily living expenses such as grocery coupons and discounts on utilities and phone bills; to health services often not covered by Medicaid such as free eye exams and glasses, braces at 10% of cost, and free mental health therapy; to free tutoring and programs to help students who are multiple grade levels behind; to laptops with free Microsoft productivity software and free smartphones for in college and college-bound foster youth, to scholarships and permanent, living-wage job opportunities for transition-age foster youth. With over 500 resources from partners as diverse as Costco and the FCC, iFoster sources the resources the community needs most to help turn surviving into thriving for our young people.

A formative evaluation by Edgewood Research Group as part of a Children's Bureau demonstration project, showed that foster and kinship families who used the iFoster resource portal showed measureable decreases in family needs, improved caregiver well-being, improved child well-being and child permanency.

Using iFoster is fast and free. Eligible transition-age youth (16-14), caregivers (foster, kin, legal guardian, adoptive), and child welfare serving organizations can sign up for free at www.ifoster.org or call iFoster for more information at 1-855-936-7837. The online resource portal is akin to using Amazon and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If members need help finding resources or run into problems getting a product or service once they've found it, the iFoster team can help them M-F from 8:30am to 5:30pm. If organizations would like more information or to schedule a workshop for their staff or clients, please call the iFoster team at 1-855-936-7837.

The Every Student Succeeds Act Interpreted into the Nevada Revised Statutes

When the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law in 2015, all states were expected to implement the federal law by De-

cember 2016, except for Nevada and Delaware. They had been proactive in the past, inserting McKinney-Vento language into state law to ensure that foster children were provided with appropriate educational services. An extension to December 10, 2017 was granted to both states to make appropriate changes in state law reflective of the mandates in ESSA.

The Statewide Collaborative on Education, Child Welfare, and the Courts began working immediately with the ABA Center on Children

and the Law to put forth an appropriate bill draft request. AB491 passed out of the Nevada State Assembly as amended and approved by the Assembly Committee on Education on April 14, 2017. It will next be heard by the Senate Committee on Education where a few more matters will be resolved. The Collaborative will work to help the Department of Education and the three child welfare agencies develop implementation processes across the state.

**For More
Information
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Unlocking Potential in Washoe County High Schools

An educational mentoring project developed by the Washoe County Department of Social Services and Washoe County School District is changing the educational trajectory of students in foster care. Matched by the project with educational advocates and tutors, students in foster care who were struggling academically took more courses and earned more credits than a control group of students not in foster care. They also improved their attendance, and most importantly, got on track to graduate. With only 50% of foster youth in the U.S. graduating by age 18, this project is helping Washoe County's foster youth beat the odds.

At the beginning of the first se-

mester in the project, 39% of participants were on track to graduate. By the end of the second semester, that number rose to 62%. Every participant in the program reported feeling supported by their educational advocates. Through the wrap-around support provided by the educational advocates and tutors, students achieved greater school stability.

From a societal perspective, helping to unlock the potential of these youths lessens their dependence on social service programs, and lessens the likelihood of their involvement in the criminal justice system. A recent study commissioned for the White House Council on Community Solutions estimated that

each youth age 16-24 who is not working or in school imposes an immediate **\$51,350** fiscal and social burden, and a **\$700,000** burden over their lifetimes. This project not only reduces long-term societal costs but helps foster youths flourish.



On-Line Attorney Dependency Training

Supported by Judiciary

For
More
Information
or to
Register
Contact:
Robbie Taft

Fourteen attorneys and CASAs from across the state have registered to take the on-line Attorney Dependency Training and two have completed and received their certification. Four of the registrants are deputy district attorneys and one is a public defender. Judges Aberasturi and Schlegelmilch in the 3rd JD have recommended that their CASA volunteers also take the course. Judge Sullivan in the 8th JD reports that he plans to require attorneys appearing in the 8th JD on dependency cases to complete the course.

This curriculum is part of CIP's strategy to improve legal representation in dependency court by ensuring that attorneys have a basic understanding of the foundational federal and state

neglect and abuse laws, as well as standards of practice and ethics.

The course contents include: Federal and State Law in Nevada Child Protection Proceedings; The Adoption and Safe Families Act; Permanency Options; Roles and Responsibilities of Attorneys; Topics in Child Welfare Proceedings; and Key Child Safety Decision Making Concepts. Participants may enroll by contacting CIP. They are expected to view all course presentations and materials, and take the quizzes to earn 7 CLEs which include .5 hours for ethics. The certificate of completion will be available after the student completes the evaluation.

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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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