



## Court Improvement Program

# Community Improvement Councils Quarterly News January-March 2015

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### Save the Date

## 2015 Community Improvement Council Summit

September 30 - October 2, 2015

CIC members will meet in Reno to learn and plan their next court improvement efforts.

### Indian Child Welfare Act

Assistant Secretary Washburn announces revised guidelines to ensure that native children and families receive the full protection of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) - the first such update since it was issued over 35 years ago.

*Guidelines clarify tribal authority, responsibilities of state courts and agencies in Indian child custody proceedings to protect tribal children and their families.*

The purpose of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) is "...to protect the best interest of Indian Children and to promote the stability and security of Indian tribes and families by the establishment of minimum Federal standards for the removal of Indian children and placement of such children in homes which will reflect the unique values of Indian culture..." (25 U.S. C. 1902). ICWA provides direction to States regarding the handling of child abuse and neglect and adoption cases involving Native children and sets minimum standards for the handling of these cases.

The guidelines will provide long-overdue guidance to state courts as they work daily to ensure full implementation of the law. The updated guidelines will help ensure tribal children are not removed from their communities, cultures and extended families. The guidelines clarify the procedures for determining whether a child is an Indian child, identifying the child's tribe, and notifying its parent and tribe as early as possible before determining placement. The updated guidelines also now provide comprehensive guidance on the application of active efforts to prevent the breakup of the Indian family. They also provide clarification that ICWA's provisions carry the presumption that ICWA's placement preferences are in the best interests of Indian children.

The link below will take you to the updated guidelines posted on CIP's website, just copy and paste:

<http://www.nevadajudiciary.us/index.php/viewdocumentsandforms/func-startdown/11187>

**New  
Guidelines  
Effective  
Feb. 25,  
2015**

## Regional Mediation Center Being Explored

Mediation has been highly successful in the 10<sup>th</sup> Judicial District. The mediations held to date have all come to successful agreement. These mediations have focused on everything from permanency plans and reunification to permanent guardianship or termination of parental rights. Judge Stockard is so pleased with the outcomes, that he is considering the possibility of developing a regional mediation center. Other judicial districts interested in exploring this concept further, please contact the 10<sup>th</sup> JD.

**For Additional  
Information Contact:**

**Sue Sevon  
Court Administrator**

[ssevon@churchillcourts.org](mailto:ssevon@churchillcourts.org)

## National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Conducting Trauma Audit in the First Judicial District

The First Judicial District has accepted the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges' (NCJFCJ) offer to conduct a trauma audit of its dependency court. NCJFCJ will be looking at the court practice and environment through a trauma-

informed lens. It has been recognized that many of the children and families who come before the juvenile court system have experienced prior (or current) trauma that could be impacting their behavior, physical health, and mental health. The court has an opportunity to promote

systems of healing for families that come before it. The trauma assessment reviews current policy, practices, and environment of the court. NCJFCJ reports back on what it learned and identifies the current successes and challenges of the court in this area. These audits

are being conducted all over the country. NCJFCJ has conducted 11 audits to date, and has a waiting list of courts wishing to have a trauma audit.

## Educational Champions Coming To Washoe County



Leading research from around the country show that foster youth are likely to change schools when first entering care. They are twice as likely to be absent from school and 2.5 to 3.5 times more likely to receive special education. Fewer than half of the youth in foster care graduate from high school and only 2 to 9% attain a bachelor's degree. The

Washoe County Department of Social Services wants to turn these statistics around for children under their care. It applied for a two year grant to provide educational case management and mentoring support for transition-age foster youth, and to evaluate the effectiveness and efficacy of this intervention. The program will use ex-

perienced "Educational Champions" to provide educational supports for each foster youth to help guide and motivate them. Data will drive advocacy-related decision making for the students, and will be used to measure intervention outcomes.

## CASA UPDATES

**For Additional  
Information  
Contact:**

**Chris Bayer,  
Director, CASA of  
Carson City  
[www.casaofcc.org](http://www.casaofcc.org)**

Nevada's CASA organizations have restarted the Nevada State CASA Association. The statewide organization has been restructured using a "network" model in which the statewide group's voting board consists of the local CASA organization directors. Lyon County recently joined

the CASA movement and Caroline Panches is now directing Lyon County CASA. The Pioneer Territory CASA hosted their sold out CASA Crab Crack in Pahrump raising \$5,000. They have already planned a Hawaiian Luau on September 12<sup>th</sup>. The new CASA of Churchill County has

trained and sworn in 13 CASAs who have a caseload of 15 cases serving 28 youth. The 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial District is exploring the possibility of creating a CASA organization in its three counties.

## Blue Ribbon for Kids Commission

### Recommendations Released

On March 27, 2015, Nevada Supreme Court Justice Nancy M. Saitta presented the final recommendations report from the Blue Ribbon for Kids Commission. This report is the first step in an ongoing strategic planning and reform process that will provide a comprehensive and sustainable strategy for realizing the goal of a child-centered, self-improving, and sustainable child welfare system to support our most vulnerable children and families.

The recommendations include:

- *Improve Reasonable Efforts and Child Safety and Removal Decision-Making*
- *Reform of the Child Welfare Agency Process*
- *Reform of the Court Process*
- *Ensure Meaningful Representation and Voice in the Process from the Initiation of Proceedings*
- *Selection, Retention, Training, and Ongoing Professional Development for all Stakeholders*
- *Improve Public Education about the System*
- *Collaboration for Systemic Overarching Reform*

In the next phase of the Commission's work, the recommendations and implementation strategies will be used as a road map for stakeholders to work together to make each one a reality. Under the guidance of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs Diagnostic Center, workgroups and committees will be convened to engage in strategic action planning for each recommendation's implementation.

While these recommendations were developed for Clark County, the Commission considered data from the entire state and national-level research about best practices in dependency. This means that some or all of the recommendations may be applicable and transferable to other jurisdictions throughout the State.

All CICs are encouraged to examine the recommendations and determine whether implementing any of these recommendations is appropriate, and might lead to improved dependency outcomes in their judicial districts. CIP is committed to assisting the CICs in their efforts.

Please copy and past the link below to see the report in its entirety.  
<http://www.nevadajudiciary.us/index.php/blue-ribbon-committee>

**For Additional Information Contact:**  
**Kathie Malzahn-Bass**  
**CIP Coordinator**  
[kmalzahn-bass@nvcourts.nv.gov](mailto:kmalzahn-bass@nvcourts.nv.gov)

