



Court Improvement Program

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Save the Date

2015 Community Improvement Council Summit

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Mark your calendars for September 30 - October 2, 2015, to join your fellow CIC members in Reno to learn and plan your next court improvement efforts. The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges will be surveying all CIC members to ascertain topic preferences for our time together. Please be certain to respond to this survey to ensure that your ideas are included.

Highlights of the CIC Action Plans

All 10 Community Improvement Councils (CICs) created action plans to improve the quality of their hearings at the 2014 Annual CIC Summit last October. Some of the highlights of these action plans include:

- ◆ All CICs intend to implement WATCH – Asking, “Why aren’t the children home?”
- ◆ 80% of the courts plan to implement case plan summaries
- ◆ Half of the judicial districts intend to increase their efforts to include children in their dependency hearings
- ◆ 40% are planning some sort of system collaboration improvement
- ◆ 40% plan to actively engage and/or notify parties
- ◆ 30% intend to focus on child well-being
- ◆ 30% plan to do work on case plans
- ◆ 30% would like to integrate mediation or settlement conferences into their dependency processes
- ◆ 20% plan to focus on attorney standards, confirming ICWA status, legal representation, safety needs of children, or CASA



The 2014 CIC Summit – What You Thought

All those attending the 2014 CIC Summit declared it a success! Comments included: “Best Summit of 3 years I’ve attended,” “The education I received was much more thorough than anticipate,” “It was great to break down each hearing type and receive feedback on our hearings,” “Good time to have open discussions about issues with current cases/caseloads,” and “It was really beneficial to participate with our jurisdiction’s team in this training.”

Following the session, 92% of the participants felt that they were either knowledgeable or very knowledgeable about the principles of quality hearings compared to only 56% before attending the Summit.

The top three responses to the survey question, “what outcome(s) do you believe can be improved by applying the information you learned?” were: 1) improve well-being outcomes (81%), 2) achieve more timely permanency (56%), and improve safety outcomes (49%).

4th Judicial District Asks the Question

When simply asking parents if they have any Native American heritage, 4th Judicial District Special Court Master Andy Mierins was surprised to find that in 86% of the cases (12 out of 14) the response was yes. Over a two week period following the CIC Summit, Master Mierins followed the recommendations of the National Council of Juvenile

and Family Court Judges as set forth in its Enhanced Resource Guideline’s Bench Cards.

The stakeholders discussed these results at a round table and decided that Master Mierins will continue this practice. Although the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) had already asked the parents about Native heritage, at the hearing

the parents may be listening and better understanding the question or may be more forthcoming. As a result of implementing what Judge Rubin taught at the CIC Summit, the court is gaining more information, especially about ICWA, which helps improve the quality of the court’s response to children and families in crisis

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Mediation Program Receives Grant Program Evaluations Help

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The 2nd JD’s Mediation Program reports that it received a grant for nearly one-third more than it requested because the program was able to demonstrate the positive impact it has had on the child welfare system overall.

When the program informed potential funders that the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges found that reunification was 76% more likely in mediated

than non-mediated cases; and fathers participating in mediation were 44% more likely to engage in their cases, the funders were most impressed. Additionally, the judiciary and other key stakeholders are collaborating on concrete plans for continuing funding, in part due to the results of the most recent impact study.

CIP has committed to helping programs that implement best-practices ensure

their sustainability by ultimately providing them with tools that demonstrate their value to other funders. These tools include evaluations by an independent and well-respected third party (National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges) and CIP grant matches.

Blue Ribbon for Kids Commission

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In October, Nevada Supreme Court Justice Nancy M. Saitta convened a Blue Ribbon for Kids Commission. The Commission plans to propose a feasible plan of action to expeditiously implement lasting reforms of the child welfare system that will ensure that the welfare of the children under its charge is its highest priority. Initially the Commission was to identify solutions for issues in Clark County's child welfare system. It became apparent that these issues are universal to one de-

gree or another throughout not only Nevada, but the country. The recommendations of the Commission are expected to be holistic in that they may be utilized throughout the State.

The Commission is in the information gathering phase. Judge Stephen Rubin, Ret. is helping the Commission focus on data-informed decision-making. Dr. Sophia Gadowski, nationally recognized expert in systems change, will be writing and Judge Rubin

will be editing the Commission's "roadmap for change" to be presented the end of January, 2015.

This "roadmap" will be designed to offer the courts evidence-based, best practices that they may implement. Technical assistance will be sought to assist implementation of the "blueprint" and to conduct process and impact evaluation of this implementation effort.

Independent Living Program For Youth Aging Out of the System

Who is eligible?

The Independent Living Program services are available to youth 15 and older who are currently in foster care and to former foster care youth who aged-out of the foster care system at age 18. Independent Living services are also available to youth who were adopted from foster care on or after their 16th birthday. Young people who aged-out may continue receiving services until age 21. Nevada will extend independent living services to youth who have aged out of care in another state.

What are the Independent Living Services?

Some of the services provided through the Independent Living Program include:

- Daily living skills
- Money management
- Decision making
- Housing assistance
- Substance abuse prevention, nutrition education and pregnancy prevention
- Preparation for postsecondary training and education
- Mentors
- Financial assistance with college or vocational schools
- Medical coverage
- Counseling
- Assistance in obtaining the GED

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Did you know?

Did you know that the President signed the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act, Public Law (P.L. 113-183) into law on September 29, 2014? This law reduces the age of those eligible from 15 down to 14 years for youth to become eligible for the Independent Living Program. This means that contact and services will be made available to youth sooner. They can begin to benefit from everything the program has to offer, and get a head start on the path to successful adulthood.

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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. 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://nevadajudiciary.us/index.php/
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