

Best Practice Court Matters

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The Advanced Judicial Leadership Institute September 11-12, 2012

As we celebrate the tenth year of the Best Practice Courts Program, the Court Improvement Program, with assistance from the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges sponsored a two-day Advanced Judicial Leadership Institute in September 2012. We recognize that there are unique challenges that are encountered by programs that have been in existence for such an extended period of time. This program was designed to strengthen and reenergize the Best Practice Court lead judges, with the goal of maintaining the momentum of this valuable program.

A total of 35 judges attended this event. Included among the attendees were lead judges from 30 Best Practice Court teams. Also included were four guest judges, who were selected based on the demographics of their localities and their past participation in CIP sponsored events.

To support this program, CIP contracted with three nationally recognized facilitators. Dr. Shawn Marsh, Director of the Juvenile and Family Department at the National Council for Juvenile and Family Court Judges, assisted CIP with securing the faculty and contributed to the presentations at the Institute. Dr. Sophia Gatowski, Executive Director of Systems Change Solutions, Incorporated, and Judge Stephen Rubin (ret.), served as the primary faculty for this event. Their presentations were based on components of the Judicial Leadership Curriculum, developed by NCJFCJ.

The first day of the Institute focused on overcoming leadership challenges to ensure results-oriented systems. Judge Rubin led a large group discussion to introduce this topic. Attendees then discussed in small groups individual leadership challenges. An exercise was completed to help judges determine their specific

court culture. Significant time was spent addressing the particular challenge of transitions in leadership.

Dr. Marsh and Judge Ellen White, Campbell JDR Court and member of the Board of Trustees, NCJFCJ, addressed Institute participants on judicially-led collaborative systems change. Dr. Marsh described the Project ONE initiative that has been developed by NCJFCJ, and Judge White related that work to the efforts that are currently underway in Virginia. Project ONE's key principals are One family-one judge, No wrong door, and Equal and coordinated access to justice. The program's Mission Statement states: "The mission of NCJFCJ's Project ONE is to provide judges and allied professionals with a guiding model, training, technical assistance, and supporting research while they examine and modify practice to maximize judicial coordination of dependency; delinquency; and family law, including domestic violence cases, both within and among courts."

(source: http://www.ncjfcj.org/sites/default/files/Project_ONE_Key_Principles_July_2012.pdf).

Dr. Marsh opened the second day of the Institute with a discussion about the importance of data to systems change. With the release of the CIP Court Performance Measures for Child Dependency Cases in April 2012, there is a renewed focus in Virginia on the use of data to assess improvements to court practice.

Judge Rubin and Dr. Gatowski then led a group discussion on the judicial leadership role in data-driven change efforts. The judges discussed the importance of outcome focused, leadership steps to achieve a results-oriented culture and practice and the use of data

"I have a new sense of purpose and want to get our team energized so we can plan for the future and keep our team going." - Judge attendee

(Continued on page 3)

Tips for a Successful Retreat

1. Have a clear purpose and outcomes in mind—"At the end of this retreat, what do we want to say was accomplished?"
2. Engage as many people as possible in the planning process. Ask questions to gather input:
 - i. What most needs to happen in order for you to feel the retreat is a worthwhile investment of your time?
 - ii. What are the most important ideas, issues, etc. that you would like included in the retreat agenda?
 - iii. What topics or issues need to be discussed, but no one may feel comfortable raising them with the group?
3. Don't underestimate the importance of place.
4. Socialize your participants to the retreat experience.
5. Plan a retreat that engages everyone.
6. Determine the facilitation needs.
7. Have an agenda but don't be ruled by it.
8. View the retreat as one significant element of an overall process to achieve your desired ends.

For more tips visit: <http://www.asaecenter.org/Resources/articledetail.cfm?ItemNumber=13057>

2012 - 2013 Best Practice Court Mini-Grants

The Court Improvement Program is excited to be gearing up for the fourth round of Best Practice Court Mini-Grants. This effort began in 2006 and has grown with each iteration.

Funds became available on October 1, 2012 and must be spent by May 31, 2013. The amount of the grant will be dependent upon the details of each specific event or initiative, including the location and the number of attendees or nature of a proposed project, such as a court video.

As in years past, CIP is offering financial and staff support to assist active Best Practice Court teams with development and implementation of either a training event or a new local initiative. There are currently 33 active Best Practice Court teams in Virginia, representing 23 of the 32 judicial districts. Whenever possible and appropriate, teams are encouraged to include neighboring localities in mini-grant activities.

In the past, the majority of teams have used

these funds to sponsor a large local training on topics of interest to the community. While this continues to be an acceptable option, CIP will work with teams on developing a retreat to reenergize or redirect the work being done locally. The text box above offers some general tips for a successful retreat. Additional details about each of the key points listed can be found online at the link provided.

For courts that choose to plan a retreat, organizers are strongly encouraged to work with CIP to determine how Court Performance Measures can enhance the discussion among your stakeholders. CIP is available to assist with interpreting data and with guiding court staff in the clean up of data, to help insure reports properly reflect court practice.

A major key to successfully planning any event or initiative is to include CIP in the planning process from the beginning. We are happy to consult with you on the appropriate use of funds, possible speakers or facilitators and finding an appropriate venue.

When you reach the point of assembling written materials, we can assist with formatting, getting the materials printed, and with their submission to the Virginia State Bar for MCLE credit.

There are certain expenses that cannot be approved. They are:

- Speaker fees - please be in touch with CIP prior to making any commitments to speakers for fees or travel expenses.
- Gifts for either attendees or speakers.
- Decorations.
- MCLE fees for credit approval - as an approved sponsor, CIP can assist you with obtaining MCLE credits at no charge.

We look forward to working with you to develop a training event, retreat or initiative that will benefit your local community. **Please reach out to us with questions along the way.**

(Continued from page 1)

in court improvement. Lori Battin, Research Analyst with the Court Improvement Program, provided a brief presentation on the Court Performance Measures. Each judge in attendance received a copy of the performance measures reports for their locality. Judges were then invited to participate in a small group exercise on problem identification and assessment.

The final session of the institute included a presentation by Jane Lissenden, Training Coordinator with the Court Improvement Program, announcing the next round of CIP Mini-Grants, which are detailed on Page 2 of this newsletter. Time was also allowed for the small groups to work together on strategic action planning. Groups were asked to identify strategies to improve outcomes locally and to initiate an action planning process.

This was a productive two-days of training and discussion and the evaluations indicated that judges found great value in this curriculum.



Left to right: Judge Stephen Rubin, Dr. Shawn Marsh and Dr. Sophia Gatowski

Meeting of Advisors to the Court Improvement Program

The Court Improvement Program convened a group of 35 advisors for a planning session on September 10, 2012. This group was comprised of J&DR District Court Judges, Virginia



Alex Kamberis and Paul McWhinney from the Virginia Department of Social Services.

Department of Social Services representatives, other representatives from Executive Branch agencies, attorneys and representatives from local departments of social services. The agenda focused on three main topics: the new Court Performance Measures for Child Dependency Cases that have been developed by CIP, the upcoming training schedule, and the brochure being developed to notify foster parents and relative caregivers of their right to be heard in court.

Lelia Hopper served as

moderator for this meeting and began with an overview of the CIP Strategic Plan for 2012 - 2016. As required by the Department of Health and Human Services, CIP is now integrating Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Principles into the work being done. By tracking outcomes more closely, CIP will be able to better assess the progress being made by grant projects.

Lori Battin, Research Analyst with CIP, provided an overview of the Court Performance Measures that were rolled out in April 2012 and provided strategies for using these new reports to improve court performance.



Lead Judges William Sharp (L) and Elizabeth Kellas (R) and Nancie Kie, Esq. (C)

CIP sponsored trainings in 2013 were reviewed by the Advisors. Current plans include mini-grants, which are detailed on page 3 of this newsletter, a voluntary judicial conference for JDR judges in April, a DSS counsel training in late summer and a Best Practice Courts Conference in the late fall of 2013. Attendees provided feedback about possible agenda items for these events.

The discussion at this meeting was lively and Court Improvement Program staff kept detailed notes, which will guide plans being made for the upcoming grant cycle.

Navigating the Mini-Grant Process...

Meet with your local team to determine the type of event you would like to sponsor



Develop a planning team led by the judge and clerk to develop an agenda, identify speakers and develop a budget



Contact CIP prior to making any arrangements, for approval of the team's initial plan.



Once the budget and topics have been approved, your team should move forward with securing a venue and confirming speakers.



Mail or email invitations to invitees (don't forget CIP). Consider whether to limit the guest list to your locality or include the entire district.



Work with CIP to format materials for submission to the Virginia State Bar. Applications to the VSB for MCLE credit must be submitted at least 30 days in advance of the program.



Confirm final arrangements with your event venue.



Develop a list of participants that includes names and professional designations of all attendees.



Have a successful event!

Upcoming Events

November 17, 2012	National Adoption Day
November 29, 2012	12th Annual Advanced Seminar for Guardians Ad Litem for Children—Richmond, VA
April 23-24, 2013	Voluntary Judicial Conference for J&DR District Court Judges - Charlottesville, VA
June 2013	Child Abuse and Neglect Institute - Reno, NV
July 14-17, 2013	NCJFCJ National Conference - Seattle, WA
Late Summer 2013	Statewide DSS Counsel Training (Date and Location - TBD)
Fall 2013	Class of 2013 Best Practice Courts Conference and Statewide Best Practice Courts Conference (Date and Location - TBD)

Best Practice Court Matters

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Best Practice Courts of Virginia

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Stafford
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Suffolk
Tazewell
Virginia Beach
Warren
Washington/Bristol
Williamsburg/James City
Winchester/Frederick
Wise/Norton

Recent Best Practice Court Events

Washington/Bristol (5/11/12) - Conducted a daylong multi-disciplinary training on a variety of topics including ICWA, Strengthening Families, bench cards, GAL practice tips and Explosive Behavior in children.

Wise (5/30/12) - Conducted a daylong multi-disciplinary training on synthetic drug use/abuse, programmatic resources, and practice tips for GALs.

Chesapeake (10/2/12) - Conducted a daylong multi-disciplinary training on working with LGBTQ youth in foster care, understanding trauma and social emotional learning.

Best Practice Court Initiatives

Fairfax - One of two courts in the country participating in the Annie E. Casey Agents of Change Leadership program. This is an intensive program, which involves long days with sessions on leadership skill building, best practices from around the country, idea sharing, and strategy development about ways to improve outcomes for older youth in foster care. AECF's hypothesis with the Agents of Change program is that localities can make a measureable impact on improving permanency for older youth by further developing a leadership team.

Alexandria, Hampton, Harrisonburg/Rockingham and Loudoun - Each of these localities has focused training efforts on the *Child Safety Guide*, published by the American Bar Association, and worked with Jennifer Renne and Terry Roe-Lund, both authors of the *Guide*, on implementation of this initiative in their community. **CIP has a limited number of these *Child Safety Guides* and related materials that can be made available for courts that identify the *Guide* as the focus of a training. Contact Jane Lissenden if you are interested in the availability of these resources.**