

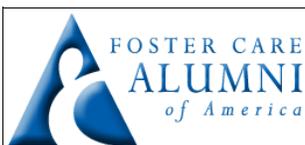
# Best Practice Court Matters

An update on the latest events of Best Practice Courts of Virginia  
Court Improvement Program  
Office of the Executive Secretary, Supreme Court of Virginia

## Class of 2008 Best Practice Courts Meeting November 19-20, 2008 Charlottesville, Virginia

## 2009 Best Practice Court Mini-Grants

The Class of 2008 Best Practice Courts Conference convened on Wednesday, November 19 at the Boar's Head Inn in Charlottesville. A total of 10 courts participated in this conference, including 8 new teams and 2 existing teams with new lead judges. Ten judges from existing teams served as mentors during the two day event.



Misty Stenslie and Nancie

Gallegos Kie from Foster Care Alumni of America delivered a powerful key note address. Both Misty and

Nancie grew up in the foster care system and shared with the attendees their personal stories.

Judge Ellen White (Campbell) and Judge William Sharp (Warren) presented on judicial leadership and community collaboration for children. This session, which was geared towards new lead judges, discussed the components of effective leadership that facilitate and support systems change.



Judge Stephen Rideout, Judicial Consultant to CIP, with Misty Stenslie (left) and Nancie Gallegos Kie (right) from Foster Care Alumni of America.

Beginning in 2006, the Court Improvement Program instituted a new program that provides each of the Best Practice Courts with mini-grants.

In the past, these funds have been used to develop a local training event or new initiative either individually or in conjunction with another Best Practice Court. This program has been such a

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### Special Delivery!

The Court Improvement Program has been fortunate to receive copies of several resources in recent months. We are happy to have been able to pass them along to you. In February, each DSS director of a local department of social services in Virginia received a copy of **How to Work with Your Court: A Guide for Child Welfare Agency Administrators**. This book was provided at no cost by the ABA Center on Children and the Law in Washington, DC.

**The Creative Vision of Virginia's Foster Youth—Voices for Change** is a resource that was developed by the Virginia Poverty Law Center and Voices for Virginia's Children. This resource includes artwork and writing that was created by foster youth in Virginia. CIP was pleased to be included as a sponsor for this initiative. In return, we were provided with a copy of this book for each J&DR District Court Judge. Voices for Change will travel around the Commonwealth in 2009 so that Virginians can see firsthand this compelling exhibit.



The schedule is as follows:

- ✧ March: Abingdon Arts Depot
- ✧ May: Rockbridge YMCA, Lexington
- ✧ July: Oswald Durant Memorial Center, Alexandria
- ✧ April: Jacksonville Center, Floyd
- ✧ June: Va Beach Higher Ed Center
- ✧ Sept: Richmond Public Library

Please visit [www.vplc.org](http://www.vplc.org) for updates on specific dates and events in these locations. ☩



Chesapeake Best Practice Court Team  
Led by Judge Larry Willis

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Presentations largely focused on leadership, collaboration and efforts that have been implemented in existing courts. An ABC's panel explained the innovative processes and special initiatives that have been adopted by existing best practice courts.

Judge Ashley Tunner presented on Team Decision Making, a program currently underway in Richmond to move foster teens to permanency. Carol McCue, a Certified Mediator, and Bragail Williams-Brown and Anne Kisor from Richmond DSS also presented.

The Virginia Department of Social Services has recently endorsed the use of Team Decision Making as a family engagement model. As a result, VDSS will be offering training and technical assistance on TDM and will work with localities who are already using another successful form of family engagement. Judge Elizabeth Kellas de-

tailed the implementation of Systems of Care in Winchester/ Frederick and the training that has been offered to local stakeholders to educate them about this program.



Smyth Best Practice Court Team  
Led by Judge Charles Lincoln

Lelia Hopper, Director of CIP, and Judge Stephen Rideout presented on the resources that are available to Best Practice Courts through the Office of the Executive Secretary. For details on the new

presenter database that has been created by CIP, see the box on page 3.

Paul McWhinney, Director, Division of Family Services, VDSS,

spoke about the partnership with DSS and the judiciary to implement a Practice Model for Virginia Children's Services.

Linda Mays, retired manager of leadership development for Philip Morris USA, presented on the dynamics of leadership and team success. Ms. Mays based her presentation on the "5 Dysfunctions of a

Team," a schematic developed by Patrick Lencioni. She put a positive spin on this model and instead discussed the 5 functions of a team. She identified these functions as:

- Trust
- Conflict
- Commitment
- Accountability
- Results

Participants were divided into professional designation groups during the morning of the second day. Each group was given a list of questions to consider. A panelist from each group was identified and asked to take notes and report back to the full conference with a summary of the professional designation discussion.

In addition to the plenary sessions and professional designation meetings, participants were given several opportunities to meet with their teams to

discuss expectations from participation in the Best Practice Court program. Mentors sat in on the team meetings and provided guidance. Teams discussed a number of questions and

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2008 Best Practice Court Mentor Judges



Suffolk Best Practice Court Team  
Led by Judge Robert Brewbaker



Roanoke City Best Practice Court Team  
Led by Judge Joseph Clarke



Waynesboro Best Practice Court Team  
Led by Judge Laura Dascher



Northampton Best Practice Court Team  
Led by Judge Croxton Gordon

**Statewide Best Practice Courts Conference  
November 2009**

The past two years have been busy for Virginia’s Best Practice Courts. Many teams have developed training events and/or implemented new initiatives. The program has grown from 26 teams to 34 teams and 2 localities have welcomed new lead judges.



Hopewell Best Practice Court Team  
Led by Judge Jacqueline Waymack

**Now Available!**

The Court Improvement Program has developed a database of topics and presenters from local and statewide training events. As teams make plans for 2009 mini-grant programs, please keep this resource in mind.

Teams can request either a list of all topics and presenters within the last 3 years or a list of presenters for a specific topic. Please call (804-786-5304) or email Jane Wiggins (jwiggins@courts.state.va.us) for additional information

We are excited to announce that CIP is in the early planning stages for a 2009 statewide conference. All 34 teams will come together in one location to share ideas and to re-energize their efforts.

Past experience has shown that the best way to improve the program is to bring teams together and allow them to learn from each other and share ideas.

The two-day conference will be held during the week of November 2, 2009. The location and exact dates have yet to be determined.

Please be on the lookout for a “Save the Date” notice with additional details. As in years past, teams will be asked to present at this conference on local initiatives, so please be sure to document all the work you are doing for the 2009 mini-grants.



Amherst Best Practice Court Team  
Led by Judge Michael Garrett



Alexandria Best Practice Court Team  
Led by Judge Constance Frogale

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success that mini-grants have again been awarded to each local team for 2009, supported with financial and staff assistance from CIP/OES. These mini-grants are made possible by federal funds through the CIP Training Grant.

Teams have been given until Friday, March 27, to submit a mini-grant proposal. This proposal must be signed by the lead judge and should detail the work of the team over the past year and plans for the future. In order to allow time for CIP to process expenditures, mini-grant programs or initiatives must be completed by August 31, 2009.

A number of Courts have already begun work on their 2009 initiatives. Projects include:

- Training on specific issues of local concern.
- Development of a video for interested parties in child dependency cases.
- Team retreats to learn

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Washington/Bristol Best Practice Court Team  
Led by Judge Florence Powell

CIP looks forward to being with all of you in November. #

**BEST PRACTICE COURT MATTERS...**

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**BEST PRACTICE COURTS OF VIRGINIA**

|                                  |                          |   |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <i>Alexandria</i>                | <i>Hopewell</i>          | <i>Smyth</i>                                |
| <i>Amherst</i>                   | <i>Louisa</i>            | <i>Stafford</i>                             |
| <i>Bedford</i>                   | <i>Loudoun</i>           | <i>Staunton/Augusta</i>                     |
| <i>Campbell</i>                  | <i>Newport News</i>      | <i>Suffolk</i>                              |
| <i>Charlottesville/Albemarle</i> | <i>Norfolk</i>           | <i>Tazewell</i>                             |
| <i>Chesapeake</i>                | <i>Northampton</i>       | <i>Virginia Beach</i>                       |
| <i>Culpeper</i>                  | <i>Prince William</i>    | <i>Warren</i>                               |
| <i>Fairfax</i>                   | <i>Pulaski</i>           | <i>Washington/Bristol</i>                   |
| <i>Fredericksburg</i>            | <i>Richmond</i>          | <i>Waynesboro</i>                           |
| <i>Hampton</i>                   | <i>Roanoke City</i>      | <i>Wmsburg/James City</i>                   |
| <i>Henrico</i>                   | <i>Roanoke Co./Salem</i> | <i>Winchester/Frederick<br/>Wise/Norton</i> |

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about best practices being implemented in other communities.

We look forward to receiving your proposals and are available should you have any questions. ☩

**Culpeper and Louisa Best Practice Court Retreat**

Changes are being made across the state that impact how services will be provided to our children and how they will be paid for. In response to these changes, Judge Frank Somerville (Culpeper) and Judge Susan Whitlock (Louisa) took a group of local stakeholders to Hampton in December 2008 to learn from a group of state and local experts “what works.” The focus of the daylong meeting was on a transformation of the delivery of services in Hampton. ☩

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identified priorities, strengths, challenges and opportunities afforded to them as a result of their participation in the Best Practice Court Program.

CIP appreciates the work of all team members who made this conference a success. ☩

**2009 Calendar of Events**

- Jan-Aug - Mini-Grant Programs
- March 19 - Advanced CLE Seminar for GALs for Children\*
- June 1-5 - Child Abuse and Neglect Institute (Reno, NV)
- July 12-16- Child and Family Services Review in Virginia
- July 12-15 - NCJFCJ National Conference (Chicago, Illinois)
- September - CIP Sponsored Training for DSS Counsel
- November 21- National Adoption Day
- November - Statewide Best Practice Courts Conference

\*“Representing Children in a Transformative Environment of Service Delivery and Resource Availability” is being offered live to GALs on Thursday, March 19. Video replays will be held in 12 locations on April 1-3, 2009. This program features First Lady of Virginia, Anne Holton, Judge Judith Kline from Newport News and Lelia Hopper, CIP Director. Agenda: vacle.org

**Child Abuse and Neglect Institute ☩ June 1 - 5, 2009**

Every day, judges are faced with difficult decisions affecting abused and neglected children in our country. With approximately 517,000 abused and neglected children in foster care in the United States, judges and court personnel are continually challenged to find the best solutions for children and families.

Given the importance of these cases, the Court Improvement Program is pleased to be able to send 5 Virginia Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court judges to the 2009 Child Abuse and Neglect Institute in Reno, Nevada. This sought after training is sponsored by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. We look forward to sharing information about these judges’ experiences in a future newsletter. ☩

