

**Office of Children, Families and the Courts  
2008 Court Improvement Project  
Strategic Plan – Basic, Training and Data Grants**

## **Introduction**

In an effort to create more positive outcomes for foster children, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania created the Office of Children and Families in the Courts (OCFC) within the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC). The OCFC's principal goal is to minimize the length of time that dependent children must spend in foster care or in other temporary living situations when they have been removed from their parents under court order as a result of abuse or neglect. The OCFC also aims to reunite children safely and timely with their families, expedite the adoption process for those children with the goal of adoption; increase the incidence of legal guardianship; and enhance/expand ongoing permanent adult connections for those children who remain in the foster care system.

## **Background**

The overarching structure for Pennsylvania's Court Improvement effort is seen in Pennsylvania's Roundtables for Children Initiative. These roundtables have created a statewide infrastructure that allows for effective administration and communication via a three tier system. Local Children's Roundtables are the first level of our infrastructure and occur within each judicial district.

The Children's Roundtable is convened and chaired by a judge. Members could include supervisory and dependency judges, children and child welfare agency personnel (this is essential as one of the goals of the Initiative is to encourage a strong collaboration between the judiciary and child welfare agencies), county solicitors, child and parent advocates, academic experts, and anyone believed to make a positive contribution to the effective functioning of dependency matters within the counties.

The second or intermediate level of the infrastructure is known as the **Leadership Roundtables**. There are eight (8) Leadership Roundtables which were developed by dividing Pennsylvania's 60 judicial districts based on size. There is a minimum of five (5) judicial districts per roundtable. The number of judicial districts per Leadership Roundtable was varied slightly to keep like-size judicial districts together. These Leadership Roundtables are comprised of three members from each local Children's Roundtables. These members include a dependency judge, the Children & Youth Administrator and one additional Children's Roundtable member. All Leadership Roundtables meet two times per year, spring & fall. The meetings provide a forum wherein members can discuss

what is occurring in their judicial districts and take back to their Children's Roundtables what is occurring in other judicial districts.

The final tier of the Children's Initiative infrastructure is seen in the **State Roundtable**. This overarching Roundtable is comprised of two members from each Leadership Roundtable and other leaders having specific expertise in dependency matters. In addition to facilitating intrastate communication, the State Roundtable is involved in the dependency reform movement at the national level to keep Pennsylvania apprised of the evolving trends and best practices.

Our expectation is that this organizational structure will contribute to a free flow of ideas, challenges and solutions. Issues will come from local Children's Roundtables for discussion at Leadership Roundtables. Like issues from Leadership Roundtables will flow upward to the Statewide Roundtable for discussion and priority setting. All activities and initiatives of the OCFC will come from priority setting done annually at the Statewide Roundtable meeting. Once decided upon, information will be shared with Leadership Roundtables and ultimately local Children's Roundtables.

The role of the OCFC, in part, is to facilitate this process of communication and decision making. Moreover the role of the OCFC is to assist in the implementation, oversight and evaluation of all statewide priorities, activities and initiatives connected with the Court Improvement Project.

### **Activities**

- **Roundtables (see information on Roundtables above and matrix p. 1):**
  - Fall 2008 (eight Leadership Roundtables)
  - Spring 2009 (eight Leadership Roundtables)
  - Summer 2009 (one Statewide Roundtable)
  - FFY 2008-09 (67 Children's Roundtables)
    - These roundtables occur at the local level and may occur at various times throughout the year as the county deems necessary.
    - The OCFC will be supporting the counties in their efforts with these meetings.
  
- **Coordination/Collaboration**
  - **Coordination and Collaboration Between the State Child Welfare Agency and the Courts for the Development of This Grant Application** - The grant application for the Court Improvement Project was developed in collaboration with the Department of Public Welfare, Office of children, Youth and Families (DPW/OCYF). The letter of support from the Deputy Secretary for Children, Youth and Families is attached to this document. The OCYF participates in every level of the

Pennsylvania Roundtable structure. A variety of the projects and committees listed in this grant application are OCYF functions that the OCFC participates in and vice versa. Many of the projects are joint collaborations, such as the Pennsylvania Permanency Project, which has oversight, TA and funding from both OCYF and OCFC. Additionally, OCYF was instrumental in the assessment of the Interstate Compact practices and laws, which is attached. Coordination and collaboration between the two entities is essential to the success of both agencies and will continue on an ongoing basis.

- **State Agency/State Court Meetings (matrix p. 1)** – The OCFC director and Deputy Secretary for Children, Youth and Families meet regularly to discuss the ongoing initiatives identified in this application. The purpose of these meetings is to ensure that cooperation between the two agencies occurs and services are not duplicated.
- **Development of Expedited Appeals Process (matrix p. 2)** - Justice Baer requested the Appellate Rules Committee to develop expedited appeals for TPR hearings. To accomplish this task the Appellate Rules Committee developed a subcommittee which includes members of the Appellate Rules Committee, Juvenile rules Committee, Domestic Relations Rules Committee and Orphan’s Court Rules Committee. The development of these rules will expedite appeals of dependency, TPR and adoption hearings throughout the state and will aid in decreasing the time a child spends in care by several months to years.
- **Juvenile Court Rules Committee (matrix p. 2)** - Sandy Moore, OCFC Director was appointed by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania as an Ex Oficio member of the Juvenile Rules Committee. As an Ex Oficio member, Sandy can bring specific Dependency issues before the rules committee for consideration. In February 2007, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania adopted Rules of Juvenile Court Procedures – Dependency Matters, which were developed by the Juvenile Rules Committee. Additionally, the Rules committee has been integral in reviewing the court orders and forms that are part of the CPCMS Dependency System.
- **National Governor’s Association (NGA) Policy Academy – Pennsylvania Permanency Team (matrix p. 2)** - Pennsylvania was one of 6 states to be selected to participate in the National Governor’s Association Academy. Sandy Moore was selected to participate as a member of this team to represent Pennsylvania Supreme Court and more specifically Pennsylvania’s Dependency Courts. The Policy Academy consists of a wide range of child welfare experts from Pennsylvania and its goal is to reduce the number of children in Foster care through a variety of strategies and collaborations.

- **OCYF Children’s Cabinet (matrix p.2)** - The Children’s Cabinet is the Advisory Counsel for the State’s OCYF Deputy Director, Richard Gold. The Cabinet is comprised of various OCFC Director, Children & Youth Administrators, Juvenile Probation Chiefs and other stakeholders. The aim is to provide input and suggestions related to issues impacting abused & neglected children as well as review/comment on proposed regulation & bulletin changes.
  - **International Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) Blueprint Committee (matrix p. 3)** - Sandy Moore, OCFC Director, is a member of this committee. This is an international committee who will develop and issue a standard blueprint, which outlines, in detail best practice standards for FGDM.
  - **FGDM Statewide Leadership Team (matrix p. 3)** - The FGDM Statewide Leadership Team provides guidance to the state for development and implementation of FGDM as well as training opportunities for the state related to FGDM. The OCFC is represented on this committee by Sandy Moore.
  - **CFSR/PIP (matrix p. 3)** - The OCFC has been involved in the CFSR/PIP process since 2007. Staff from the OCFC has been members of the CFSR Steering Committee, participated as a state reviewer and was interviewed as state stakeholders. The OCFC will continue to participate in the development of Pennsylvania’s PIP, particularly as it pertains to Dependency Courts and collaboration between courts and agencies.
  - **Practice Standards Revision Committee (matrix p. 3)** - Pennsylvania has initiated revising the best practice standards. Staff from OCFC are members of this committee. The purpose of this committee is to revise the current Child Welfare Practice Standards for Pennsylvania.
- **Technical Assistance**
    - **Direct contact/support of local Children’s Roundtable Teams (matrix p. 3)** – OCFC staff will be hired and assigned to a region to provide direct TA to courts at a local level. The staff will support all children’s roundtable activities in that region and aid local jurisdictions in developing and implementing programs, practices and initiatives. Staffing information is provided below.
    - **Direct contact/support of Leadership Roundtables, including support of Chairpersons (matrix p. 3)** - OCFC staff will be hired and assigned to a region. The staff will coordinate Leadership Roundtable

activities by supporting the leadership roundtable chairs. Staff will also encourage inter jurisdictional communication and provide for planning and development of initiatives.

- **Provide system data/explanation and assist with strategic planning to address data identified needs (matrix p. 3)** - OCFC Regional staff will support the counties in their region through data analysis. Staff can share data trends within the county and support strategic planning, development of programs and implementation of practices that may correct any concerns.
- **Provide expertise regarding practice initiatives for PPI (See Below) (matrix p. 4)** – Information related to the PPI is provided below and in the attached concept paper.
- **Conferences/trainings**
  - **2008 Best Practice Conference – “Promoting Permanence Through Family Connections” - November 13 & 14, 2008 (matrix p.5)** - This conference is provided as a follow-up to last year’s best practice meeting with featured Family Group Decision Making (FGDM). This year’s conference will feature an update on FGDM, Family Finding and Family Development Credentialing. All three practices are integral pieces of the Pennsylvania Permanency Practices Initiative (PPI). We will bring experts in each area to speak and provide information on the practices. Attendees will include teams of five Children’s Roundtable members, which will be selected by the Dependency Court Judge and CYS Administrator. The meeting will occur at the Nittany Lion Inn in State College. A brochure for the conference and tentative agenda are attached.
  - **First Annual Children’s Roundtable Plenary Session - September 23 & 24, 2009 (matrix p. 5)** - The OCFC will be presenting the first annual Children’s Roundtable Plenary Session in September 2009. This conference will provide a variety of workshops, keynotes and presentations related to Dependency/Permanency issues. The conference will be open to members of children’s roundtable members from across the commonwealth, plus various statewide partners, which include OCYF, Juvenile Court Judges Commission (JCJC and many others). Attached is the save the date flyer for this conference.
  - **Winter/Spring, 2009 - State Trial Court Judges Conferences Dependency Workshops (matrix p. 5)** - The AOPC offers the State Trial court Judges Conference two times per year. The topics of the conference cover a wide variety of judicial arenas. The OCFC has a standing workshop time to provide information related to court

improvement. This summer's conference, Sandy Moore and Justice Baer had the opportunity to present on the Pennsylvania Permanency Initiative (PPI). This session was attended by over 50 judges from across the state.

- **Educational/Information Initiatives**

- **Dependency Benchbook (matrix p. 5)** - The OCFC has initiated the development of Dependency Benchbook. This Benchbook will provide judges with information they can reference at their fingertips. The guide will provide explanations of various hearing types, citing the new Dependency Court Rules, DPW regulation and updated state and federal legislation. The Benchbook will include appropriate child & family development science to include areas of grief and loss, attachment and bonding, drug and alcohol services and behavior health issues for foster children of various ages. This will aid judges to make the most appropriate decisions related to a child's case in hopes of providing safety, permanency and well-being in a timely manner for the children that come into courtrooms in Pennsylvania.

The OCFC has identified the National Center for Juvenile Justice as a consultant to help guide us as we develop our Benchbook. NCJJ was the entity that provided Pennsylvania's original CIP assessment, as well as, the reassessment. They are also responsible for writing Pennsylvania's Delinquency Benchbook and will be able to provide their experience and insight to ensure that the Dependency Benchbook follows the same structure and path.

We have received multiple proposals from very reputable entities to develop and author the Benchbook. The Vendor should be selected by September 1, 2008.

A Benchbook committee which comprises mostly of Dependency Court Judges has been convened and will have its initial meeting with the identified Vendor on October 17, 2008. The Vendor will meet a second time with the Benchbook Committee in spring of 2009 and will provide a draft of the Benchbook in late spring of 2009. The final copy of the Benchbook will be provided to OCFC by August 15, 2009.

- **Graduated Curriculum for Dependency Judges Education** - After the Benchbook is completed a committee will be gathered to develop a graduated curriculum for Dependency Judges. This curriculum will utilize the Benchbook as textbook or guide for Dependency Court training. The Benchbook will be completed in August 2009 and curriculum development will not occur until September 2009. The bulk of this work will be completed after October 1, 2009 and is identified in

the 2009 Grant Application, as most of the work and funding will come during that year.

An evaluation process from all OCFC trainings including those as a result of the curriculum will be evaluated. This will be an ongoing process to gauge the effectiveness of the OCFC trainings, curriculum and to identify topics and ideas for future trainings.

- **Website design and development (matrix p. 6)** - The OCFC has begun drafting a request for proposals to identify a vendor to provide requirements specification, design, development, and hosting for an interactive website for the OCFC. The site will support the OCFC's vision and provide electronic information to courts, children, families and professionals in Pennsylvania.

The website will also maintain a section to inform judges on upcoming trainings as a well a means for conference registrations.

Additionally, a section of the website will be devoted to distance learning, which will allow judges to interactively receive necessary information and training without leaving their judicial districts. We are anticipating development of the website to be complete in summer 2009. The development of the distance learning module will occur in winter 2009. This will also be addressed in the 2009 Grant application.

- **Data System**

- **Implementation of Pennsylvania Dependency Data System (matrix p. 7)** - The AOPC Judicial Automation Department has developed a Dependency Data System. Roll out of the system commenced in March 2008. The Judicial Automation Department anticipates 65 of the 67 counties to be live on the system by December 2008. Due to the complexities of the remaining two counties (Allegheny and Philadelphia) are scheduled to "go-live" by summer of 2009.

Although Judicial Automation Staff are implementing this system using state funds, OCFC staff will provide ongoing Programmatic Support to the Judicial Automation Dept and local jurisdictions.

To implement this system the AOPC Judicial Automation Department added a module to the current Common Pleas Case Management System (CPCMS) and collaborated heavily with the OCFC, OCYF, JCJC and the Juvenile Rules Committee. The forms and court orders that are a part of the system and that will be utilized statewide by Dependency courts were reviewed by our partners.

In September 2007 and again in December 2007, several county child welfare agency directors, court administrators and other local staff from across the state were selected to participate in a Joint Application Development (JAD) meeting. This group was the equivalent of a focus group to help guide our IT staff in development of the project. In February 2008 three counties were selected as Pilot counties and staff who would be users on the system were provided with a week-long training on the current system. Feedback from those users provided further information regarding development.

The forms and court orders that would be part of the system were created using current orders of court developed by JCJC as well as information from other states. These forms and orders were reviewed by JCJC, OCYF and the Juvenile Rules Committee for accuracy and functionality.

In the spring 2008 the Judicial Automation Department provided a brief overview of the system, forms and orders to all 8 Leadership Roundtable meetings. Any comments and feedback were used to further develop the system.

Beginning in March 2008 staff from the Judicial Automation Department began site visits to counties to assess their needs for implementation of the Dependency Module. As of August 2008, 66 of the 67 counties have had a site visit. The final county is being scheduled. After the site visit occurs a "go-live" date is determined for the county. At go-live the Judicial Automation Department send a team of staff to the county for a week of training and technical assistance on the system. Further comments and feedback received from the county aids in further development of the system. Comments related to the forms and orders are captured and reviewed by the Juvenile Rules Committee. As of August 2008, 59 counties have training/go-live dates scheduled, two counties (Allegheny and Philadelphia) are scheduled for 2009, and the remaining seven counties are in the processing of scheduling dates.

- **Mini-grants for Data input and backlog clean up (matrix p. 7) -** OCFC will provide counties who request services with funding and support to allow each county to input backlog data and clean up any current data in Dependency Data System. This will allow each jurisdiction in the Commonwealth to be online using the Dependency Data System with all cases entered. Completing this will allow counties to immediately begin producing complete data reports upon implementation of the data system.

- **Development & initiation of Data Reports (matrix p. 7)** - The AOPC, OCFC will develop data reports that can be pulled from the Dependency system. These reports will provide statewide aggregate Dependency data reports as well as county specific data. This data will be provided to local jurisdictions as well as Children's, Leadership and Statewide Roundtables. Based on data trends, OCFC can provide TA and support to aid local courts in their implementation of practices and initiatives which will support timely and safe permanency for children.
- **Development & initiation of Research Reports on Best Practice Permanency Initiative (PPI) – Phase One (matrix p. 7) (See more information below)**
- **Data Sharing (matrix p. 7)** - The OCFC and OCYF have arranged to share various data reports. The Dependency Data system can only provide information related to children and families who have entered the court system, additional data can be gathered from OCYF related to abuse/neglect and services provided, which may occur prior to court involvement. The mutual sharing of data will provide a wider picture of the dependency system in Pennsylvania. More complete data will allow us to effectively target high need areas.

**Pennsylvania Permanency Initiative (see attached Concept Paper for additional details)**

This project is a collaborative effort between the AOPC/OCFC, DPW/OCYF, FGDM Statewide Implementation Leadership Team, Family Development Credential Program through the Community Action Association of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program (CWTP), the University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work and the Statewide Adoption Permanency Network (SWAN) along with local child welfare agency directors and local judges.

The team identified above will select 16 counties to participate in the initiative. These counties will be selected based on letters of interest submitted to the OCFC. A team of individuals representing the above agencies will choose 16 counties to be the initial Phase of the initiative. This project is expected to run from October 1, 2008 to September 30, 2009. At that point additional counties will be selected for Phase 2. The selected counties for this initiative are anticipated to be identified by August 15.

The Phase 1 counties are required to have the following services, practices and/or initiatives in place or the capacity to immediately (within 6 months of the project initiation) meet these requirements:

1. Three (3) Month Court Review Hearings (minimum)
2. Family Search Capacity (as a front-end service)
3. Active Local Children's Roundtable (local initiative oversight team)
4. Family Group Decision Making
5. Family Finding/3-5-7 Model
6. Family Development Credentialing

All of these practices/services are expected to be provided at initiation of service in the agency. Providing these extensive services at the initiation of services or immediately upon the child entering the foster care system will allow agencies and court to more quickly and efficiently move children to permanency, which will prevent them from spending long periods of time in the foster care system.

After the counties are selected an assessment of needs will be provided to each of the counties to determine their status with respect to the above mentioned practices. Counties will be provided support to initiate or enhance these practices. The needs assessment of counties is to be completed by October 30, 2008.

To accomplish the project's goals and outcomes as described in the concept paper we will use a combination of funding and services from a variety of sources. The OCFC use of CIP funds will provide for training for Family Finding, three month review hearings and the roundtable project.

The OCFC will support counties in training of Family Finding. The OCFC has already scheduled dates for Kevin Campbell to provide training to the Phase 1 counties in September 2008. Additionally, Kevin will be retained as a consultant to work with counties in the practice of finding relatives for children as they become known to the agency or immediately upon entering into care or as a means of preventing placement. Consultation with Kevin will begin October 1 and extend for a six-month period.

The OCFC using CIP funds will also support the counties, as needed, in moving to 3 month review hearings. Other areas of the project will be funded through DPW/OCYF.

For the purposes of program sustainability counties are being encouraged to begin to put necessary needs for the initiative and appropriate staffing into their NBBs. Although these funds may not be available this year they can provide for sustainability of the program in the future. Additionally, as part of the initiative, counties are required to commit to the reinvestment of state/local funds (Act 148 funds) as a result of any cost savings realized by the county. Any funds saved should be retained in child welfare to support more extensive prevention programs.

Technical Assistance will be provided to all Phase 1 counties through the agencies mentioned above. Teams of representatives of each of the agencies will provide site visits to counties as needed to provide information, support and training in those areas identified in the needs assessment.

## **Staffing**

To accomplish the identified activities the OCFC will require additional staffing.

Additional staffing:

- Three (3) program analyst level staff will be added to the OCFC compliment in 2008. All three analysts will serve specifically assigned county courts/Children's Roundtables. Two analysts will be maintained in the Central Office (Harrisburg) and one will be regionally based to correspond with the PPI.
- Each staff would additionally be assigned Leadership Roundtables (between 10 -35 judicial districts, depending on county size)
- Staff will provide TA to Children and Leadership Roundtables, individual counties and will participate in PPI TA Team.
- Staff will provide an analysis of data and ongoing support, including assisting local Roundtables in development of strategic plans to address data identified needs
- Staff will be trained in FGDM, FF & FDC to act as lead TA for PPI

## **Outcomes**

By incorporating strength-based social work practices with specific court related changes the OCFC is anticipating the following outcomes over the next two years:

- Enhanced Judicial Oversight of Dependency Matters.
- Increased education of dependency court participants (judges, attorneys, advocated, child welfare staff, etc.)
- Continued and enhanced collaboration with the courts and agencies at the state and local levels
- Shared analysis of data with courts
- Directed TA to counties at a local level
- Reduced number of children/youth adjudicated dependent and in court-ordered placement
- Reduced time children/youth spend in the foster care system.
- Reduced number of children/youth who re-enter care
- Reduced Dependency Court Caseload
- Reduced caseworker court caseload

- Reduced costs of children in care (Reduction of placement costs means that funds could be redirected to other services (such as prevention, aftercare, adoption, pilot services, etc.)
- Reduced level of care (i.e. – reduced number/percent of restrictive placements and increase in kinship care, when placement is needed)
- Increased Placement Stability (less moves for children).

### **Activities to Address Pennsylvania Reassessment Recommendations**

- Recommendation #2: Establish a T/TA unit within the AOPC – The OCFC will provide training and technical assistance for Dependency Courts. The office is currently up and running and has also identified additional staffing needs as outlined in this grant application. Additionally, the AOPC’s Judicial Programs Department also provides TA to the local courts and the Judicial Education Department provides training for judges.
- Recommendations #4 through 7: State should consider making statutory changes (time-limited process for permanency determinations; TPR and adoption matters; concurrent planning; strengthen the family service plan; inconsistencies for petition filing and petition adjudication). - In February 2007, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania adopted Rules of Juvenile Court Procedures – Dependency Matters, which were developed by the Juvenile Rules Committee. Sandy Moore is an Ex-Officio member of the Juvenile Rules Committee. Information in Pennsylvania’s Benchbook and the future curriculum training will use the Juvenile rules as a foundation. The time-limited process for permanency determinations, TPR and adoption matters is occurring through the development of expedited appeals, which are in the process of being drafted by the Appellate Rules Committee (addressed in grant narrative p. 5 and matrix p. 2). Petition filing and court orders are being addressed through the Dependency Data System, which will make some petitions and orders consistent statewide (addressed in this document p. 7 and matrix p. 7). All other matters are addressed through the roundtable meetings, Pennsylvania Permanency Initiative and Pennsylvania’s PIP.
- Recommendation #9: Recruitment of judges interested in juvenile matters to juvenile bench, and encourages assignments for a minimum 3-5 year assignment. - As a result of the culture change promoted by the Supreme Court and the OCFC and the initiation of the children’s roundtables this has already occurred. Judges are requesting to remain in dependency court. The Supreme Court, specifically Justice Baer and the OCFC supports and encourage this practice as consistency in the dependency judge and a move to a one judge, one family model would benefit children and their families. It should be noted that the Supreme Court has chosen not to mandate this practice. As a locally driven state, the local President Judge ultimately has the authority to determine what is the best fit and need for their county, which includes assignments of judges.

- Recommendation #12: Examine and document lack of attorney resources -  
This is an issue and we will be addressing this in our 2009 grant application. We plan to provide attorney training and best practice guidelines, specifically to Guardians Ad Litem and Parent Advocates.

### **Attachments**

- List of Statewide Roundtable Members
- ICPC Assessment
- Pilot Project concept paper
- CPCMS Dependency System overview and “roll-out” calendar
- Save the Dates
- Leadership Roundtable structure chart
- PPI handouts
- Agenda and save the date for Best Practice Conference – “Promoting Permanence Through Family Connections” - November 13 & 14, 2008

**2008 PENNSYLVANIA COURT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT  
STRATEGIC PLAN**

<b>BASIC GRANT</b>						
<b>Focus Area</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Interim Benchmark</b>	<b>Planned Outcome</b>	
<b>Pennsylvania Roundtables for Children Initiative</b>	Children's (Local) Roundtables	OCFC Local Jurisdictions	Ongoing	All counties will have functional Children's Roundtables	Each jurisdiction will have functional local roundtables and will represent their jurisdiction at the next level of Leadership Roundtables. All 60 Judicial Districts will have functional Children's Roundtables by 2010.  The Children's Roundtables will provide enhanced judicial oversight of Dependency matters at the local level.	
				Children's Roundtables will convene as determined by the local roundtable		
	Leadership Roundtables	OCFC Leadership Roundtable Co-chairs Representatives of Local Roundtables	Bi-yearly Ongoing	Leadership Roundtables scheduled	Leadership Roundtables will be comprised of 2 representatives from each Children's Roundtables. Two members of this group will represent the Leadership Roundtables at the Statewide Roundtable. Leadership Roundtables will meet once in the Spring and once at the annual conference.  The Leadership Roundtables will provide enhanced judicial oversight of Dependency matters at the state/local level.	
				Fall 2008		Spring 2009
				9/10/08 9/11/08 9/22/08 9/23/08 9/25/08 9/26/08 9/29/08 10/1/08		March 2009 April 2009
	Statewide Roundtable	Justice Baer OCFC	Annually; Ongoing	Statewide meeting will occur June 23, 2009	Information will be filtered up from local and Leadership Roundtables to the Statewide Roundtable and back again. All OCFC initiatives will be presented to the Statewide Roundtable for approval prior to implementation.  The Leadership Roundtable will provide enhanced judicial oversight of Dependency matters at the national/state/local level.	
<b>Coordination and Collaboration</b>	State Agency - State Court Meetings	Sandy Moore Richard Gold Jim Anderson	Ongoing; Monthly	This group has initiated monthly meetings, these meetings are scheduled throughout the year	This meeting will encourage the OCFC Director, JCJC Executive Director and Deputy Secretary for Children, Youth and Families to meet on a regular basis to discuss Dependency issues.	

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	Development of Expedited Appeals Process	Appellate Rules Committee Sandy Moore Expedited Rules Subcommittee	January 2009	Appellate Rules Committee developed a subcommittee which includes members of the Appellate Rules Committee, Juvenile Rules Committee, Domestic Relations Rules Committee and Orphan's Court Rules Committee	Development of rules that expedite the appeals of dependency, TPR and adoption hearings. The expediting of the appeals process could decrease the length of time of children in care by several months to years.
	Juvenile Court Rules Committee	Juvenile Court Rules Committee Sandy Moore	Ongoing	Sandy Moore, OCFC Director appointed by the Supreme Court of PA as an Ex Officio member of the Juvenile Rules Committee	Dependency court rules can be developed or enhanced to meet OCFC/CIP goals as a result of Sandy's direct participation as Ex Officio member
	National Governor's Association (NGA) Policy Academy– Pennsylvania Permanency Team	NGA Sandy Moore Pennsylvania Permanency Team	Ongoing	Pennsylvania was one of 6 states to be selected to participate in the National Governor's Association Academy.  Sandy Moore was selected to participate as a member of this team to represent Pennsylvania Supreme Court and more specifically Pennsylvania's Dependency Courts.	The Policy Academy aims to reduce the number of children in Foster care through a variety of strategies and collaborations.
	OCYF Children's Cabinet	Sandy Moore	Ongoing	Sandy Moore was asked to join this group to represent the needs/views of Dependency Courts	The Children's Cabinet is the Advisory Counsel for the State's OCYF Deputy Director, Richard Gold. The Cabinet is comprised of various Children & Youth Administrators, Juvenile Probation Chiefs and other stakeholders. The aim is to provide input and suggestions related to issues impacting abused & neglected children as well as review/comment on proposed regulation & bulletin changes.

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	FGDM International Blueprint Committee	Sandy Moore	Ongoing	A proposed initial blueprint document will be shared at the 2009 International Conference	The group will develop and issue a standard blueprint document outlining, in detail, best practice standards for FGDM.
	FGDM Statewide Leadership Team	Sandy Moore	Ongoing	The Statewide Leadership Team meets every other month.	The Statewide Leadership Team provides guidance to the state for development and implementation of FGDM.
	CFSR/PIP Steering Committee	Angelo Santore	Ongoing	Angelo represents the OCFC on the CFSR Steering committee and is a State reviewer for the onsite CFSR review.	OCFC staff will participate in this group in an ongoing basis through the PIP development and implementation. The needs identified in the PIP related to the court will be priorities for upcoming years.
	Practice Standards Revision Committee	Angelo Santore	Ongoing	Angelo represents the OCFC on the Practice Standards Committee	OCFC will represent the court needs as they pertain to best practices in dependency matters.
<b>Technical Assistance</b>	Direct contact/support of local children's Roundtable Teams	OCFC	October 2008; Ongoing	Staff will be approved and hired by the OCFC.	OCFC staff will be hired and assigned to a region to provide direct TA to courts at a local level. The staff will support all children's roundtable activities in that region and aid local jurisdictions in developing and implementing programs, practices and initiatives.
	Direct contact/support of leadership Roundtables, including support of chairpersons	OCFC	October 2008; Ongoing	Staff will be approved and hired by the OCFC.	OCFC staff will be hired and assigned to a region. The staff will coordinate Leadership Roundtable activities by supporting the leadership roundtable chairs. Staff will also encourage inter jurisdictional communication and provide for planning and development of initiatives.
	Provide system data/explanation and assist with strategic planning to address data identified needs	OCFC	December 2008; Ongoing	Staff will be approved and hired by the OCFC.  Dependency Data System has begun rollout and will be implemented statewide by December 2008.	OCFC Regional staff will support the counties in their region through data analysis. Staff can share data trends within the county and support strategic planning, development of programs and implementation of practices that may correct any concerns.

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	Provide expertise regarding practice initiatives for Pennsylvania Permanency Initiative (PPI)	OCFC PPI Planning Committee TA Team	Phase I – October 2008 through September 2009	PPI Planning committee is currently meeting regularly to develop this Initiative.  Phase One counties will be identified by August 15, 2008.	Staff will provide oversight and participate on group TA teams for the PPI. TA Teams will work in the identified Phase One counties to implement a combination of court and social work best practice which will reach the following outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevention of placement</li> <li>• Children spending less time in substitute care</li> <li>• Placement stability</li> <li>• Reduction of re-entry into substitute care</li> </ul> For more information on the PPI, please refer to the attached concept paper.

**2008 PENNSYLVANIA COURT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT  
STRATEGIC PLAN**

**TRAINING GRANT**

<b>Focus Area</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Interim Benchmark</b>	<b>Planned Outcome</b>
<b>Conferences/ Trainings</b>	2008 Best Practices Conference – “Promoting Permanency Through Family Connections”	OCFC OCYF PPI Committee Conference Planning Team	November 13 &14, 2008	This conference is scheduled for November 13 &14, 2008. The planning committee has started developing an agenda which will incorporate the three practice elements included in the BPPI	This conference will provide follow up to last year’s conference on FGDM. Attendees will understand the 3 initiatives identified by the Roundtables and will leave the conference with an action plan on how to begin developing these practices in their local jurisdictions with support from the OCFC and TA teams as described in the BPPI. Teams from local jurisdictions (including the dependency judge and C&Y Administrators) will attend, enhancing court/agency partnerships.
	1 <sup>st</sup> Annual Statewide Children’s Roundtable Plenary Session	AOPC, OCFC, OCYF, Conference Planning Committee Children’s Roundtables, Leadership Roundtables, Statewide Roundtable,	September 23 & 24, 2009	This conference date and preliminary agenda has been set. A conference planning committee comprised of judges, C&Y administrators, Guardian Ad Litem, and others has been created.	The annual statewide conference will provide a forum for all members of the Roundtables Initiative to receive information related to the progress of the OCFC. Attendees will be provided information related to dependency court issues throughout the state based on information gleaned from roundtables. Participants will include teams from each Children’s roundtable as well as dignitary’s and OCFC staff.
	State Trial Court Judges Conference Dependency Workshop	AOPC, OCFC	Winter 2009 and Spring 2009	At each State Trial Court Judges Conference, time will be set aside to provide information specifically related to dependency & permanency for abused & neglected children. Attendees will be local dependency judges and court administration.	The OCFC will use the allotted time at the State Trail Court Judges Conference to update Dependency judges on current Dependency issues, provide updates, or arrange for experts in various Dependency related matters to educate judges and provide a forum for informal communication regarding dependency/permanency issues.
<b>Educational/ Information Initiatives</b>	Development of Pennsylvania Dependency Benchbook	AOPC, OCFC, NCJJ, Benchbook Committee	August 2009	The OCFC has contracted with the National Council of Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) to provide consultation services to OCFC and the Vendor selected to write the Benchbook.  An ITB has been issued which	This Benchbook will provide judges with information they can reference at their fingertips. The guide will provide explanations of various hearing types, citing the new Dependency Court Rules, DPW regulation and updated state and federal legislation. The Benchbook will include appropriate child & family development

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				<p>solicits proposals for the writing entity of the benchbook.</p> <p>A workgroup has been formed to oversee the development of the actual bench book. This committee is comprised of judges from large, medium and small sized jurisdictions, including the two largest jurisdictions in the Commonwealth. The committee is supported by staff from the OCFC and the AOPC Education Division.</p>	<p>science for foster children of various ages to enable judges to make the most appropriate decisions related to a child's case in hopes of providing safety, permanency and well-being in a timely manner for the children that come into courtrooms in Pennsylvania.</p>
	Website Design and Development	AOPC, OCFC	Fall 2008	OCFC is preparing a bid to Vendors	The OCFC website will allow OCFC to provide up to date information related to the efforts of the OCFC. Information will include various initiatives, conference schedules and secure pages for Roundtable members.

## DATA GRANT

Focus Area	Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe	Interim Benchmark	Planned Outcome
<b>Dependency Data System</b>	Implementation of Pennsylvania Dependency Data System	AOPC/Judicial Automation, OCFC	December 2008	The AOPC Judicial Automation Department has developed a Dependency Data System in collaboration with OCYF, OCFC, JCJC and other stakeholders. Roll out of the system has commenced with 9 counties live on the system, 32 scheduled with "go live" dates and another 26 scheduled for site visits.	The Commonwealth will have a Dependency Court Data System. Although Judicial Automation Staff are implementing this system using state funds, OCFC staff will provide ongoing Programmatic Support to the Judicial Automation Dept and local jurisdictions
	Mini-grants for data input and backlog data clean up	AOPC/Judicial Automation, OCFC	Fall 2008 - Spring 2009	Counties will provide OCFC with approximate staff time to enter backlog data into the Dependency System.	OCFC will provide counties who request services with funding and support to allow each county to input backlog data into the Dependency Data System.  This will allow each jurisdiction in the Commonwealth to be online using the Dependency Data System with all cases entered.
<b>Dependency Data Reports</b>	Development and Initiation of Data Reports	AOPC/Judicial Automation, OCFC	Summer 2009; ongoing	Judicial Automation staff have initiated development of data reports based on NCJFCJ, ABA and NCSC performance measures in collaboration with OCFC staff	OCFC will be able to provide statewide aggregate Dependency data reports as well as county specific data. This data will be provided to local jurisdictions as well as Children's, Leadership and Statewide Roundtables. Based on data trends, OCFC can provide TA and support to aid local courts in their implementation of practices and initiatives which will support timely and safe permanency for children.
	Development and initiation of research Reports on Pennsylvania Permanency Initiative – Phase 1	AOPC/Judicial Automation, OCFC, PPI Planning Committee TA Team	January 2009; ongoing	Local data reports can provide information to Phase One counties involved in the PPI.	Data reports will provide local jurisdictions with baseline data for the pilot project. The analysis of trends will allow the TA teams to assist the local jurisdiction in the implementation of various initiatives.
	Data Sharing	OCFC, OCYF	Ongoing	Both offices have initiated dialogue regarding the sharing of data between courts and agencies.	The mutual sharing of data will provide a wider picture of the dependency system in Pennsylvania. More complete data will allow us to effectively target high need areas.

