

PENNSYLVANIA'S COURT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
TRAINING GRANT
PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR
FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2009
(OCTOBER 1, 2008 - SEPTEMBER 31, 2009)



AOPC

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

*Office of Children and
Families in the Courts*

Pursuant to the Administration for Children and Families Program Instructions ACYF-CB-PI-06-05, the Office of Children and Families in the Courts (OCFC), Pennsylvania's Court Improvement Project (CIP) hereby submits its annual Program Assessment Report for the CIP Training Grant for Federal Fiscal Year 2009 to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Administration of Children and Families (ACF) Region III. This annual program report addresses all training and education activities of Pennsylvania's 2009 CIP; the outcomes of court improvement activities; and how they help provide for the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and youth in Pennsylvania's foster care system.

I. Description of needs and activities undertaken with CIP funds to meet those needs during the program period

The following list represents those needs that the OCFC has identified and addressed throughout Federal Fiscal Year 2009. These needs were identified as a result of the various Leadership Roundtable meetings and the annual priority setting process of the State Roundtable (Interdisciplinary Advisory Committee for CIP). The needs also encompass recommendations of the 2005 CIP Reassessment produced by the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) that have yet to be completed as well as those which are being addressed but are seen as ongoing needs. Finally, close collaboration, discussion, and ongoing planning with Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare's Office of Children, Youth, and Families (DPW/OCYF) officials assisted in the identification of these needs. Identified needs include:

- The need for a comprehensive training curricula for all Dependency Court Stakeholders (i.e. judges, attorneys and court staff);
- The need to enhance understanding of strength-based, solution focused practice for courts and child welfare system professionals,
- The need to enhance understanding of the etiology/symptoms of grief, loss and attachment of foster children;
- The need for a centrally located clearinghouse of information regarding Dependency matters;
- The need for creative delivery of Dependency Education;
- The need for further education of judges in dependency law, procedure and child well-being; and
- The need for further education of judges and other legal professionals regarding the effect their decisions have on children's safety, permanency and well-being, with regards to child's age and stage of development.

II. Activities and progress towards the goals delineated in the strategic plan and results of the assessment of activities funded under this grant

Many training opportunities and activities were provided by the OCFC and our partners during FFY 2009. These included a statewide conference, "Enhancing Permanency through Family Connections", Dependency Sessions at two Pennsylvania State Trial Court Judges' Conferences, one Leadership Roundtable, one State Roundtable, various training sessions on Family Finding, 3-5-7 Grief/Loss process, Family Group

Decision Making; development of a Judicial Bench Book and development of an OCFC Dependency Clearinghouse website.

OCFC Sponsored Training

Enhancing Permanency through Family Connections - Statewide Conference

In November 2008, OCFC collaborated with the DPW/OCYF to sponsor a statewide conference aimed at enhancing the knowledge of all involved in the child dependency system regarding the use of strength-based practices that promote family connections and family involvement. The conference brought together county teams from forty-five (45) counties.

Built off the momentum gained from the 2007, “Expanding FGDM” conference, the 2008 conference highlighted the additional strength-based, family-focused practices of Family Finding and Family Development Credentialing and the issue of grief/loss for dependent children. The conference also provided a forum to discuss the PPI county shift to 3-month court reviews for dependency matters. The conference agenda (Attachment A) and evaluation (Attachment B) are attached to this report.

Permanency Practice Initiative

In September 2008, Phase One counties of the Pennsylvania Permanency Practice Initiative were selected. Staff from the fourteen Phase One counties received training on the practice elements of the Initiative including Family Finding, Family Group Decision Making, Family Development Credentialing, and 3/5/7 Grief & Loss.

All Phase One counties received training related to Family Finding during FFY 2009 2008. Kevin Campbell, founder of Family Finding, provided three overview sessions (East, Central, and West) and a six-session series to PPI Phase One county staff (totaling 21 days) from October 2008 through February 2009. This first series of training concluded in February 2009 with amazing results (Attachment C).

During FFY 2009, a second PPI Phase began. Staff from PPI Phase Two and PPI Phase One began this second series of Family Finding training. From August 2009 through September 2009, nine (9) Family Finding Training days were completed. Phase Two Family Finding training concluded in FFY 2009 again with amazing results which will be included in the FFY 2010 Program Assessment Report.

At the same time, DPW/OCYF purchased the Accurant Search engine for all 67 Pennsylvania Counties. This tool used to locate missing persons was incorporated into the Family Finding process.

In addition to Family Finding training, all PPI Phase One counties received Instructor Institutes for Family Development Credentialing. A total of 72 individuals were trained as FDC county trainers. Twelve counties completed FDC Portfolio Advisor Training during FFY 2009 2008. A total of 184 individuals were trained as Portfolio Advisors.

Overview training on all practice components was attended by Phase One (and later Phase Two) county judges and child welfare administrators. This level of attendance was mandatory for all PPI counties.

In July 2009, Phase Two counties of the Pennsylvania Permanency Practice Initiative were selected. Staff from the thirteen Phase Two counties began Family Finding training in August and September (finishing such in December 2009...this will be further discussed in the FFY 2010 Program Assessment Report).

Additionally, OCFC collaborated with DPW/OCYF and the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Program (CWTP) to develop a Pennsylvania specific curriculum on Family Finding. This collaboration was critical to sustain the practice and expand such to future PPI counties. Working with Kevin Campbell, founder of Family Finding, sessions one and two of the curriculum have been written. Finally, OCFC and DPW/OCYF has developed a joint written memo of understanding that prioritizes the training for current and future PPI counties (Attachment D).

State Trial Court Judges Conferences Dependency Workshops – summer 2009

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 session providing information related to Dependency Court Improvement. During the FFY 2009, two such sessions were provided covering a variety of CIP topics (Attachments E & F). The sessions were well attended with more than 50 judges from across the Commonwealth in attendance.

Spring 2009 Leadership Roundtable Meetings:

In spring 2009, OCFC supported eight Leadership Roundtables (LR) in various locations across the commonwealth. During each LR training was provided by OCFC staff and OCYF staff. Since all Leadership Roundtable agendas are identical only the agenda from Leadership Roundtable 1 is provided as an attachment to this report (Attachment G). Training topics included: the CPCMS Dependency Data Module, Fostering Family Connections Federal Legislation (Attachment G), and Pennsylvania's Safety Assessment.

State Roundtable Meeting:

On May 28 & 29, 2009, the State Roundtable held its annual meeting. During the meeting, a presentation regarding Fatherhood was provided by Mrs. Karen Jenkins, American Humane Association, and Mrs. Mimi Laver, American Bar Association. As a result of their presentation, the State Roundtable selected "Fatherhood" as a priority 2009 - 2010 issue.

Additional Trainings/Presentations

Philadelphia Judges' Training – On October 21, 2008 training was provided to Philadelphia Family Court Judges assigned dependency matters. The training focused on the practice of Family Group Decision Making and was provided by OCFC Administrator, Sandy Moore, and It Takes a Village Executive Director, Patti Noss (Attachment H).

Pennsylvania Children & Youth Administrator's Association - On March 26, 2009 OCFC Judicial Analyst Angelo Santore moderated a panel of judges, child welfare administrators and human service directors as they addressed the full body of the PCYA (approximately 100 professionals). The panel provided information on the PPI, including expedited 3-month reviews and the various practice components. Additionally, Mr. Santore provided an update on all CIP activities (Attachment I).

County Commissioners' Association of Pennsylvania – On April 1, 2009 Supreme Court Justice Max Baer, OCYF Deputy Secretary Richard Gold, Dauphin County Commissioner George Hartwick III, Allegheny Human Service Director Marc Cherna and Blair County President Judge Jolene Kopriva presented a plenary and a workshop session at the County Commissioner's Association meeting. The presentations outlined the practice changes within the PPI and the ultimate benefits to child/families and county budgets.

Allegheny Judges' Training - On April 2, 2009 training was provided to the entire Family Court bench of Allegheny County. This training, conducted by Supreme Court Justice Max Baer, OCFC Administrator Sandy Moore and OCFC Judicial Analyst Lynne Napoleon covered the specific elements of the Permanency Practice Initiative Phase One (Allegheny is a Phase One county) as well as strategies to expedite permanency for children (Attachment J & K).

Allegheny County Family Finding Training - At the request of the Allegheny County local children's roundtable, all the Allegheny County Children, Youth and Families caseworkers and many of the system stakeholders (including GALs, parent attorneys and CASA) were trained in Family Finding. This specially designed training, presented and facilitated by Kevin Campbell, founder of Family Finding, and OCFC judicial analyst Lynne Napoleon, took place over eight days from May 2009 to September 2009. In addition to this system specific training, OCFC brought Kevin Campbell to Pennsylvania to present a one-day workshop for the larger community at the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh annual Conference on Hope and Healing on April 24, 2009. This event was well attended by many professionals from multiple disciplines that touch the lives of the children in the dependency system.

International Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) Conference – June 2009 – The 2009 International conference was held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Over 300 Pennsylvania legal professionals, social service professionals, and youth/parents attended the conference. Many Pennsylvania professionals provided workshops at the conference (Attachment I). Honorable Duane Woodruff, Allegheny Court of Common Pleas judge provided the opening session. Honorable Max Baer, Supreme Court Justice, moderated a panel of Pennsylvania judges and child welfare professionals in a plenary session specifically targeting court involvement in family engagement strategies. Sandy Moore, OCFC Administrator, Blair County President Judge Jolene Kopriva and Dauphin County Dependency/Orphan's Court Judge Todd Hoover provided a workshop specifically addressing legal issues in implementing FGDM (Attachment L)

Statewide Adoption Network Permanency Conference – On June 24, 2009, Mr. Angelo Santore provided a Court Improvement workshop at the SWAN Permanency Conference. With approximately 50 foster parents, adoptive parents and child welfare professionals in attendance, Mr. Santore provided an update on Pennsylvania's Court Improvement activities.

Philadelphia Family Finding Session – September 16, 2009, in an effort to assist Philadelphia County advance the implementation of family engagement, OCFC Judicial Analyst Angelo Santore presented an overview and outcomes presentation regarding Family Finding. Mr. Santore presented to 25 judges and top child welfare officials.

Local Children's Roundtables – Various presentations related to court improvement, including the Permanency Practice Initiative were presented to local Children's Roundtable meetings by all four OCFC Judicial Analysts and the OCFC Administrator. Approximately eight counties were visited for this purpose on the direction of Pennsylvania's Court Improvement Program.

Pennsylvania Dependency Judicial Bench Book

As outlined in the FFY 2009 Training Grant budget, plans were underway to create a Pennsylvania Dependency Judicial Bench Book. To this end OCFC collaborated with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) and the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) to provide assistance with this project. Work began with the creation of a Bench Book Development Committee and a first meeting on October 17, 2008. During FFY 2009 the full Bench Book Committee had seven full day meetings. The Bench Book Edit Committee has convened eight times via conference call to review emailed shared documents/chapters. The Committee, chaired by Lackawanna County Court of Common Pleas President Judge, Honorable Chester Harhut is the only State Roundtable committee comprised entirely of judges. Composition of this group was developed in such a way to ensure the document was created by and relevant to dependency judges. Members include the following trial and superior court judges:

Honorable Chester Harhut, Lackawanna County – Committee Chair
Honorable Carol Hanna, Indiana County
Honorable Susan Gantman, Pennsylvania Superior Court
Honorable Todd Hoover, Dauphin County
Honorable Brian Johnson, Lehigh County
Honorable Charles Saylor, Northumberland County
Honorable Kelly Streib, Butler County
Honorable Carol Van Horn, Franklin/Fulton Counties
Honorable Campbell, Berks County
Honorable Kim Berkeley-Clark, Allegheny County
Honorable Kevin Dougherty, Philadelphia

The Bench Book will provide judges specific information regarding the dependency process/best practices for courts. It will provide explanations of various hearing types, citing the new Dependency Court Rules, DPW regulation and updated state and federal legislation. The Bench Book will include appropriate child & family development science highlighting areas of grief and loss, attachment and bonding, drug and alcohol services and behavior health issues for foster children of various ages. The Bench Book will aid judges in making the most appropriate decisions related to a child's case to provide safety, permanency, and well-being in a timely manner. Upon completion, the Bench Book will be used as a textbook for future training of judges, hearing officers and attorneys.

Unfortunately, the original target completion date of August 2009 needed to be revised twice. The current target completion date is May 2010. This change was needed for many reasons. As work progressed on the document, several significant shifts occurred in its production. First and most significant was the recognition that incorporating the flavor and feel of a Pennsylvania Dependency Court along with the significant practice shift envisioned by the State Roundtable would require all chapters regarding the actual hearings to be primarily written by Pennsylvania judges rather than our national expert partners. As such, members of the bench book committee volunteered to write the actual chapters (using information provided by NCSC). With the intent of highlighting best practices and how dependency hearings should look in Pennsylvania rather than how they may actually occur currently, our judicial writers discussed and included a set of fifteen “themes” that would be woven throughout the document. These themes, outlined in the chapter “The Charge for Pennsylvania’s Dependency System” are listed below:

- **Active/ongoing Court Oversight** – In dependency matters the court has always maintained oversight until the supervision of the case is terminated. The direction of this Bench Book will guide the sitting judge/master to actively listen and ask questions that challenge all those before the court to expedite permanency for the child and families involved in each individual case. More frequent court oversight can effectively move children to safe permanency quicker.
- **One Judge-One Family** – Considering the ongoing complexity of most dependency matters, the approach of using one judge who hears the family’s entire dependency case from initial hearing until conclusion of court involvement is preferred. In jurisdictions utilizing Hearing Masters or Officers, the approach would apply to those judicial officers and include the oversight judge. This practice ensures stability and continuity throughout the case with the added benefit of ensuring timely permanency for children.
- **Early appointment of competent, well-trained legal counsel** – The assignment of competent, well-trained legal counsel for all parties is extremely important in dependency proceedings. Understanding one’s rights and responsibilities as well as the potential legal consequences of actions is critical to the outcome of a case. As such, courts should ensure counsel for all parties are well trained and well equipped to provide comprehensive and thorough client representation. Additionally, counsel should be appointed as early as possible upon filing of a dependency petition, preferable prior to the Shelter Hearing.
- **Safety** – Paramount in all child dependency matters is the issue of safety. This safety includes both physical and emotional aspects of a child’s development. Additionally, the protective role of all those who work with children will be highlighted. While parents and family are the foundation for child safety, when this becomes threatened, the responsibility shifts to the child welfare professionals and ultimately the court. Safety assessments, decisions, and follow up are key elements of the dependency system and assessment of such is needed at each judicial review.
- **Timeliness** – Childhood is an incredibly limited number of years with dramatic development needing to occur as the foundation to all other years. Research has demonstrated again and again that children who grow up in stable, loving, permanent family environments do much better in all areas of adult living. As such, timely service implementation, judicial review and decision making, including permanency

decisions is critical. The issue of timeliness and recommended optimal time requirements will be highlighted throughout the Bench Book.

- **Concurrent Planning** – The Court holds the ultimate responsibility to ensure permanency for all dependent children, either by safe reunification or by securing an alternative permanent home for the child. With the overarching goal that all children grow up in loving, permanent homes the use of Concurrent Planning is critical in the child dependency system. Use of Concurrent Planning; however, can be confusing and appear at odds with reunification. This does not have to be the case and indeed, use of Concurrent Planning may indeed lead to higher levels of successful, safe reunification. As such, specific elements of concurrent planning will be highlighted at each stage of the dependency court process.
- **Front-loading of the System** – This Bench Book will express the importance of providing services for children and families upon the initiation of the case. The more quickly services are provided to the families, the more likely families will be engaged in services, thereby achieving permanency more timely.
- **Maintaining Family Connections** – The maintenance of family connections, even with families that may not be reunified, is invaluable to promoting strong families. This Bench Book emphasizes the importance of family connections and the damage that can be caused to a child when proper steps are not taken to maintain these connections.
- **Keeping Siblings Together** – Included in the need to maintain family connections is the more specific need to maintain sibling connections. Often siblings see themselves as their only connections to families and many older siblings often feel responsible for the care and well-being of younger siblings. Information will be provided throughout this Bench Book regarding the potential harm caused to children when these bonds are severed.
- **Fatherhood** – Often overlooked or given minimal attention is the issue of fathers. This includes locating fathers early in the court process, ensuring needed services are provided in a gender-sensitive manner, arranging for meaningful/frequent visitation and including paternal relatives in the care of children, when appropriate. Special attention to locating and engaging fathers should be given at the initial and each subsequent hearing.
- **Use of Kin care and Least Restrictive Placements** – With the passage of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, the need to identify kin has become more important than ever. In the past, kin have not been considered as resources, because popular belief dictates, that if the parents the children were removed from are “no good” then their relatives must be no good as well (i.e. - the theory that the apple does not fall far from the tree). This has been proven a myth and with innovative tools such as Family Finding and web-based search engines, extended families can be found more often and with more success.

- **Early Implementation of Services and Visitation Schedule** - As with the front-loading of services mentioned earlier, a set, definitive visitation schedule, when appropriate, is imperative for maintaining family bonds and connections. Research has shown that frequent regular visiting: enhances children’s emotional well-being and adjustment while in care; improves parents’ positive feelings about the placement and decreases their worries about their children while they are in care; and is strongly correlated with achieving the placement outcome of reunification, achieving other permanency planning outcomes and decreasing time in care (Pennsylvania Visitation Manual (1999), p. 11).
- **Tailoring Services to Meet Specific Needs of Each Child and Each Family** – The “cookie cutter” approach to providing services to families does not work. Each family the system works with is different and therefore services need to be tailored to fit each family’s individual needs. The identification and delivery of services is best accomplished through a collaborative process with the family. Prior to the filing of a petition, child welfare agencies and, at times, even courts, utilize practices to help identify services for families. These practices are voluntary, and parents are free to refuse to participate until the court has taken jurisdiction of the matter. Included in these practices are forms of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), such as Mediation, Facilitation, as well as various types of family conferencing, with Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) the preferred practice in Pennsylvania, which allows the family to participate in the decision making process along with the child welfare agency, service providers, and other interested parties.
- **Creating Culture/Expectation of Non-Adversarial Process** - The use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) has significantly reduced the traditional adversarial approach to dependency court. As recognized by the Journal of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (Vol. 16, 1999) “the traditional adversarial legal process has never been regarded as the most appropriate means to derive that which is in the best interests of the children.” As with the use of FGDM for agencies to determine services, other ADR approaches from the court perspective provide an opportunity for parents to be empowered to determine the solutions to their problems. This shift from traditional court approaches to family & solution-focused approaches requires significant change in court business processes.
- **Recognizing and Reducing Trauma for Children and Families** – When a child gets involved in the “system” the physical toll that abuse/neglect may have is often clearly seen, however just as important and often overlooked is the traumatic toll the dependency process as a whole takes on children and families. Families are complex social structures and their disruption has the potential to be injurious to both the child (children) and the adults. Michael Town, a Circuit Judge in Hawaii coined the phrase “Jurigenic effect/harm” to describe the unintentional harm that occurs because a family/child is involved in the court system. No one reading this Bench Book will have the time to learn and understand all there is to know about the traumatic toll that the dependency system may take on children and families. This concept is addressed throughout the Bench Book and in more detail in the Science Companion to provide helpful tips to the courts in addressing the potential issues that may arise related to trauma.

In addition to these themes, the aforementioned Pennsylvania Dependency System Mission and Guiding Principles are also incorporated into the Judicial Bench Book (Attachment M). The amended target completion date also includes a plan to “pilot” the draft bench book with several new dependency judges and hearing

officers, a re-write based on feedback from the pilot, presentation to the State Roundtable in May 2010 meeting and release at the July 2010 Pennsylvania State Trial Court Judge's conference.

Once completed the bench book will be the guide for all new and current dependency court judges, attorneys, Guardians ad Litem and other child welfare professionals. The bench book will also be added to the OCFC website, available to anyone interested in accessing such. The bench book will become the basis for future judicial education and will be used in part at the upcoming New Judges School in January 2010 (which will be covered in the FFY 2010 Program Assessment Report).

Graduated Educational Curriculum for Dependency Judges

Upon completion of the Bench book, the current committee has agreed to remain intact to develop a graduated curriculum for Dependency Judges. Discussion of this began upon Pennsylvania's return from the National Supreme Court Summit in Austin, Texas. The Bench Book committee has committed to develop the education plan and to act as the entity providing revisions in future years. Judge Harhut has agreed to continue as committee chairperson. Curriculum developed will utilize the Bench Book as the primary text.

1st Annual Children's Roundtable Summit

Working in collaboration with the DPW/OCFC, the PPI Oversight Team, the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission, the State Roundtable and the Statewide Family Group Decision Making Leadership Team, planning for the inaugural Children's Roundtable Summit began. With the development of a Children's Summit Planning Committee, chaired by the Honorable Kim Berkeley-Clark, the Summit adopted the format of the past National Supreme Court Summits. The original format of an inspirational event aimed at motivating attendees was changed to a "working summit".

The Children's Summit would invite five person teams from each judicial district, comprised of the lead dependency judge, the child welfare administrator and three additional local children's roundtable members. The committee focused on making the Pennsylvania Summit a working event, which would culminate in each judicial district developing a county plan with specific actions steps to be implemented locally, aimed at advancing safe, timely permanence for dependent children. Specifically, the Summit would focus on strengthening the local Children's Roundtable structure, identifying priorities linked to reducing emotional trauma, enhancing system collaboration and using data to inform system change efforts.

Scheduled for September 2009, the Summit had to be postponed to November 2009. This change was the direct result of the International G-20 Economic Summit being scheduled to be in Pittsburgh on the same week as the Children's Summit. Due to security, accommodation and travel restrictions the Children's Summit was delayed. As such, specifics regarding the actual Summit will be provided in the 2010 Program Assessment Report; although a vast amount of the planning occurred in FFY 2009.

Guardian ad Litem Training

At its annual meeting in May 2009, the State Roundtable adopted training for Guardians ad Litem and Parent Advocates as priorities, with emphasis placed on the former group. The State Roundtable commissioned

the development of a training committee to develop the curriculum, training schedule and the training roll-out plan. To committee, being chaired by Butler County Court of Common Pleas Judge, the Honorable Kelly Streib, has solicited volunteers. OCFC Judicial Analyst, Lynne Napoleon, is providing primary staff support to the group and began researching best practices/training curriculums during the Summer of 2009. The workgroup officially began its work in FFY 2010 and as such will be discussed in further detail in the 2010 Program Assessment Report.

A specific action step plan for the development of this training has been developed and included in Pennsylvania's Performance Improvement Plan (Attachment N)

Web-based Distance Learning

A section of the OCFC website, developed primarily during FFY 2009 is dedicated to Judges & Legal professionals. The website www.ocfcpcourts.us includes specific resources for those serving in dependency courts. Future enhancements to the website include distance learning opportunities. These enhancements will be developed upon completion of the Judicial Bench Book and the Guardian ad Litem training curriculum.

Expedited Appeals Training

In 2008 a sub-committee led by the Honorable Maureen Lally-Green, comprised of members from the Appellate Rules Committee, Juvenile Rules Committee, Domestic Relations Rules Committee and Orphan's Court Rules committee and Sandy Moore, OCFC Administrator convened, created a set of expedited appellate rules for dependency matters and submitted such to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. In March 2009, the new rules were adopted by the Supreme Court and became effective. In March & April of 2009, Judge Lally-Green and Fred Frank, Esq. provided in person and web-based training through the Continuing Legal Education Board for attorneys across the Commonwealth. Currently implemented, the OCFC is working closely with county courts and the Superior Court to track the effectiveness of these new rules.

III. Pennsylvania's overall Training activities and progress towards meeting the recommendations delineated in the 2005 CIP Reassessment

- Recommendation #12: In similar fashion, the Statewide CIP Committee and the AOPC should examine and document the lack of attorney resources; specifically, attorneys for parents and child advocates (GALs) for children, and examine ways to begin addressing these. The expanded use of dispositional advisors/caseworkers to support parents' attorneys may also be critical in this regard. Early appointment and adequate advocacy resources for parents and children should be part of any pilot effort funded by CIP to front-load the court process – As mentioned in the previous section, the OCFC is in the process of developing training for judges and court stakeholders. A committee has been assembled to specifically research and develop curriculum for Guardian ad Litem and parent legal advocates. The committee includes judges, Guardians ad Litem, child welfare professionals, parent attorneys, CASAs and other legal professionals. Additionally, OCFC staff will be working closely with the Pennsylvania Partnership for Kids (an advocacy group for foster children) and DPW/OCYF staff to ensure relevant, comprehensive training process.

The committee will review national best practices, develop & implement curriculum and make further recommendations to the 2010 State Roundtable. The committee timeline and planning

action steps have been included into Pennsylvania's Performance Improvement Plan. Final curriculum will include information from the Judicial Bench Book as well as the Pennsylvania Dependency System Mission & Guiding Principles. Plans for in-person and distance learning will be constructed by the group with support from both OCFC and OCYF.

IV. Recommendations of the State Interdisciplinary Advisory Committee (State Roundtable)

The State Roundtable identified training for Guardians ad Litem and Parent Legal Advocates as priorities activities for the Children's Roundtable Initiative and the OCFC. The State Roundtable also identified the issue of "fatherhood" and best practices around engagement as a priority as well as the issue of truancy. Both issues are being researched and a educational plan will be included in any recommendations made to the 2010 State Roundtable membership.

V. Results of any Assessments of Activities Funded Under this Grant

There have been no further assessments related to training activities under this grant.

Attachments

- A Enhancing Permanency through Family Connections Conference Agenda
- B Enhancing Permanency through Family Connections Conference Evaluation
- C Family Finding - Phase One County Results (power point)
- D Family Finding Training Memo (OCYF/OCFC)
- E Pennsylvania State Trial Court Judges - Dependency Court Session (2/09)
- F Pennsylvania State Trial Court Judges - Dependency Court Session (7/09)
- G Spring Leadership Roundtable Fostering Connection Training (power point)
- H Philadelphia Court Session (10/08 Agenda)
- I Pennsylvania Children & Youth Administrator's Association (3/09 power point)
- J Allegheny County Family Group Decision Making & the Courts Workshop (power point)
- K Allegheny County Judges Training - Court Improvement (power point)
- L Family Group Decision Making International Conference Agenda (6/09)
- M Pennsylvania Dependency System Mission & Guiding Principles
- N Guardian ad Litem Training Development Plan