



SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS PERMANENT JUDICIAL
COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

ANNUAL REPORT



Supreme Court Children's Commission Dated June 16, 2015

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GENERAL OVERVIEW OF 2014 PROJECTS

General Overview of 2014 Projects

PARENT REPRESENTATION INITIATIVES

In the last quarter of 2013, Children's Commission organized a workgroup, which began meeting to discuss how Texas judges, attorneys and child welfare partners might better serve parents navigating the child protective services (CPS) system. Two projects were identified.

Parent Resource Guide

The workgroup embarked on the development of a Parent Resource Guide designed to help parents be educated about the CPS process, their role and responsibilities, and the responsibilities and duties owed to them by others. The Guide helps orient parents to the gravity of their situation, validate emotions they may be feeling, and provide tools that may be helpful in organizing and keeping track of progress. The University of Texas William Wayne Justice Center for Public Interest Law helped write the resource guide, which will also be translated into Spanish. The workgroup will continue to confer and meet in FY2015 to discuss the feasibility of establishing an online resource center through the Texas Legal Services Corporation, and possibly a video or a smartphone app.

Parent Legal Representation Project

In the fall of 2013, McLennan County began an innovative project to provide legal representation to parents involved in CPS cases through contract agreements with local law firms. The contracts provide for a flat monthly fee and a 50-case cap per year. In July, 2014, the Texas Court Improvement Program began an evaluation project to 1) identify strengths and weaknesses of the model; 2) make recommendations for improvements to the model; and 3) assess the feasibility of replication in other jurisdictions. The evaluation included interview and file reviews against locally adopted processes and standards of representation, as well the Indicators of Success for Family Representation, developed in partnership with the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law. The evaluation covered the first six months of the project and concluded that in a few short months, the model had already improved the quality of representation for parents. The model appeared to promote a self-selecting process where attorneys who are not necessarily driven by financial gain were willing to take on the contracts, which in turn resulted in the attorneys putting in the hours required to appropriately advocate for their clients. It did not bear out, as was the initial concern, that attorneys would do only the bare minimum since they were not being paid more for extra hours. The size of the county and of the project also influenced the performance in that it brought informal pressure to provide high quality representation as it would be obvious or well-known to others when or if legal representation was lacking. It improved rapport and relationships between the lawyers and the social workers because the "team" working on behalf of parents was smaller and each became familiar with work styles and attitudes of the others. The model reduced continuances and delays making time-certain docketing more feasible. Benefits of the flat contract rate seem to outweigh the negatives as it reduced many

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of the perverse incentives of hourly practice, including demands for jury trial on termination of parental rights. Larger firms also seemed better able to endure the financial situation more easily than smaller ones simply because they had more resources available to spread the work as well as financial shortfalls. The project appears to have the potential to control costs while moving cases toward resolution in a timely manner, although the project has not been evaluated to determine whether cases are resolved sooner than they were before the project was initiated.

CHILD PROTECTION BENCH BOOK

In October 2013, the Child Protection Bench Book has been online on the Children's Commission website, and connected to a citation service called LawBox Citation Services, In July 2014, the Children's Commission launched a Bench Book checklist pilot that ran through December 2014. Approximately 25 judges participated in the pilot, and were surveyed three times during the six month period. The goal of the project was to establish whether judges prefer shorter versus multi-page or statutory versus topical checklists, or whether the checklists should be targeted to less-experienced versus more experienced judges. Feedback from the judges indicated that they wanted access to *Holley v. Adams* best interest factors and termination grounds, that they liked having a succinct list of issues and requirements, and that the bench cards increased the likelihood that relevant and pertinent issues would be covered in future hearings. For example, prior to the pilot, about 10% of judges asked about child's educational goals at every review hearing and 48% asked at most hearings. After the pilot, 40% asked at every review hearing and 55% asked at most hearings. Prior to the pilot, only 5% of judges asked about child's Native American heritage at every hearing and 23% at most hearings, and after the pilot, 23% asked at every review hearing and 50% asked at most hearings. All of the bench cards as well as the bench book will be updated as soon as the 84th legislative session ends in May 2015.

COMMISSION ROUND TABLES

On April 23, 2014 the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas and the Children's Commission co-hosted a round table discussion in Livingston, Texas, at the Alabama-Coushatta Reservation. The round table brought together tribal and state court judges, state leaders, subject matter experts, and policy-makers to discuss issues affecting Native American children and families in the courts.

Judge Darlene Byrne facilitated the round table. As the presiding judge of the 126th District Court, the Vice Chair of the Children's Commission, the Vice President of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) and the President-elect of NCJFCJ, she brought great insight as to the importance of ICWA and opened the round table with the goal of developing a plan so that our Indian children can remain connected with their family and tribe while going through a child welfare case with an informed court and community about the important promise made in the ICWA.

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The Children's Commission is committed to improving compliance with the letter and spirit of the ICWA through improved judicial handling of child protection cases. Court practices have a profound impact on a child's ability to exit the foster care system in a timely manner with the best outcomes. Courts are also responsible for ensuring that parties have good legal representation and meaningful court hearings. For children and families of Native American heritage, courts not only have an opportunity to connect Native American children with their families and tribes, they have a heightened duty to do so.

To support courts in this important work, the Children's Commission has partnered with Texas tribes to develop judicial education that provides judges with the foundational knowledge they need to understand why the law is necessary, and how they can become the judicial leaders needed to partner with tribal communities. This round table was held in conjunction with the 4th Annual Alabama-Coushatta Judicial Symposium. The day and a half Symposium featured nationally-recognized speakers who shared their experiences from representing the Cherokee Nation in the Baby Veronica case, incorporating Peacemaking Court principles into state courts, and creating new and inventive state/tribal collaborations to improve outcomes for children and families. Both the round table and the Symposium offered judges, peacemakers, and the many stakeholders an opportunity to build mutually respectful relationships and create a blueprint for tribal and state collaboration in Texas.

LEGAL REPRESENTATION

The Legal Representation Workgroup formed two subcommittees in 2014 to focus on two broad issues. An indigence subcommittee was charged with examining the feasibility of creating a statutory definition of indigence; factors to consider in determining indigence; standardizing indigence affidavits and unsworn declarations; and feasibility of creating a limited duration attorney appointment for parent at time CPS suit is filed. A standards of representation subcommittee was charged with determining whether the Commission should develop and promote the adoption of standards of representation; the scope of the standards; inclusion of local practice tips and guidance; and whether attorneys should be encouraged or required to sign annual certification acknowledging compliance with standards and education requirements under the Texas Family Code. The workgroup also supported the creation of public defender offices and managed assigned counsel offices to provide legal representation to children and parents involved in child protection cases. Exploring the development and adoption of Texas Standards of Representation for Attorneys Providing Legal Representation in Child Protective Services Cases, including training standards.

In August 2014, the decision was made by the workgroup to pursue the development and adoption of representation standards. Also, in November 2014, the Children's Commission submitted three legislative initiatives to the Judicial Council, which were approved. Those initiatives included: 1) amending the Texas Family Code to affect determining indigence and timing of appointment of legal representation for parents in child protection cases; 2) placing tighter controls on the process used when child protection cases transfer from one county to another to help ensure state mandated deadlines and party appointments are not missed;

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and 3) establishment of publicly funded parent and child public-defender type offices and managed assigned counsel offices in individual counties or clusters of counties within a particular region.

TEXAS BOARD OF LEGAL SPECIALIZATION

An application for legal specialization through the Texas Board of Legal Specialization (TBLS) was submitted to the TBLS with approval of the Supreme Court. The Specialization, entitled Child Welfare Law, is defined as the practice of law dealing with judicial and administrative proceedings involving children who are in the conservatorship or legal custody of the State of Texas, primarily pursuant to Texas Family Code, Subtitle E (Protection of the Child). The practice includes, but is not limited to, proceedings involving a governmental entity, namely the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), and the conservatorship of a child and/or the termination of parental rights, placing children in temporary or permanent foster care, and adoption proceedings involving DFPS in which a court or agency is required to make decisions affecting the parent-child relationship. The Children's Commission submitted the completed application, the required 100+ signatures of attorneys who support establishing a specialization, and suggestions for a 20-member advisory committee to advise the TBLS on the creation of the new specialization. The application is pending with the TBLS.

JURIST IN RESIDENCE

The Jurist in Residence (JIR) position was created to foster judicial leadership and promote greater expertise among child protection judges. The JIR acts as a consultant, trainer, and speaker to provide expert and seasoned judicial advice on matters affecting courts and legal system handling of child welfare cases and issues. Additionally, informational letter and "blasts" concerning items of interests, such as training events, are routinely issued. In FY 2014, the Commission published JIR newsletters or news blasts on the following topics: 1) Release of the updated Bench Book; 2) New Medical Consenter Training; 3) Trial Skills Training Opportunity for Attorneys; 4) Education Decision-maker Form 2085-E; 5) Attorney Training Opportunities; 6) Family Visitation/Visitation Plans; 7) Non-Pharmacological/HB 915 Legislative Update; 8) Importance of the Indian Child Welfare Act; 9) New Child Protection Courts; 10) Unaccompanied Alien Children; and 11) Foster Youth in Court Video; 12) Addressing Treatment Needs of Juvenile Sex Offenders; 13) the Hearing Observation Project; and 14) and Permanency Round Tables.

CHILD WELLBEING

In the summer of 2013, the Children's Commission conducted an observation and data collection study, called the Hearing Quality Observation Project, involving 164 child welfare hearings held across Texas. The primary purpose of the project was to establish a baseline about the quality of court hearings occurring in child welfare cases in Texas, including hearing factors such as timeliness and length, depth of issues discussed, party and judicial compliance with the Texas Family Code, parental due process, party engagement, children's appearance in court, attorney preparedness, and attorney and parent satisfaction

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with legal representation. Since that time, the Children's Commission issued a report (March 2014), which revealed that the majority of Texas child welfare courts address statutorily required issues at some point in the case and many courts are sufficiently assessing aspects of the child's well-being while in foster care. There are a few indicators, both statutorily required and national best practices, which might result in better outcomes for children and families, if addressed more often in court. While some information does appear in the case file, the presence of the information in the case file does not necessarily mean that the judge, the parties, or the attorneys are fully informed about the issue or that the information is correct and up to date. Therefore, it is advisable that judges and attorneys discuss as much of the information relevant to the case in the court hearings as possible. The following recommendations highlight areas of inquiry that should be discussed more often in the courtroom and efforts courts can take to enhance the depth and breadth of the information presented and help ensure child wellbeing is not diminished.

- Reviewing Permanency Plans and Concurrent Plans More Often
- More Emphasis on Child Well-Being in Placement Review Hearings
- Address Sibling Visitation when Siblings are not Placed Together
- Consider Alternative Placements More Often
- Require Children to Attend Court Whenever Possible
- Engage Children and Parents During Hearings
- Encourage Caregivers, Particularly Non-Kinship Foster Parents, to Attend Court and Engage Them in Process

An implementation action plan for this project has been developed that includes the following activities to be undertaken in FY 2015:

- Obtain input regarding well-being issues from youth formerly in care
- Update Child Protection Law Bench Book and checklists to include well-being content and distribute to judge at annual Child Welfare Judges Conference
- Develop one JIR paper on well-being issues and disseminate to judges
- Develop and provide judicial training regarding well-being issues at annual Child Welfare Judges Conference
- Develop and implement a plan to provide judicial certification regarding well-being issues

DISPROPORTIONALITY AND DISPARITY

The JDW has been in place since 2011. In June 2014, the JDW met in-person during the annual Child Welfare Judges' Conference and agreed to continue to support the work of the Texas Center for the Elimination of Disproportionalities and Disparities (CEDD) as it transitions its work to a statewide committee made up of systems and community leaders. The work of the statewide committee will be focused on data-driven evidence, leadership, cross-systems collaboration, community engagement, and training based on anti-racist

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principles. The Children's Commission also provided financial support for the CEDD's 2014 Cross Systems Summit. The summit focused on a cross systems collaborative approach to addressing inequities in multiple systems and how outcomes in health and human services, social services, education, juvenile justice, housing, and other systems impact health and wellbeing. The summit featured feature breakout sessions on both days on topics around social determinants of health, social justice, community engagement, cross systems collaboration, and advancements in addressing disproportionality and disparities in Texas.

TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

Children's Commission continued its efforts to support the child welfare system shift toward a trauma-informed care system. Specifically, the Children's Commission devoted efforts to developing and promoting judicial and attorney training about trauma-informed care, promoted by Dr. Karyn Purvis's Trust-Based Relational Intervention program, Dr. Bruce Perry's Trauma Academy, and other leading trauma experts. The Children's Commission also added updated information about trauma informed care in the CPS Judicial Bench Book as well as liaised with and participated as a collaborate partner in the various trauma-informed workgroups such as the DFPS Trauma-Informed Care Workgroup, the CASA Mental Health Task Force, and the Texas Disability Rights' Workgroup. Children's Commission staff also monitored the trauma-informed care trainings, workgroups, meetings, and strategies hosted, sponsored or initiated by various groups and provide reports to the Children's Commission and other stakeholders as appropriate.

MEDIATION IN CHILD PROTECTION CASES

Over the course of FY 2014, commission staff worked with Cynthia Bryant of the University of Texas School of Law Mediation Clinic and others as they examined data related to CPS cases mediated in Travis County. In September 2014, UT applied for a grant to help determine the best practices and cost-effectiveness of mediation for Travis County, Texas. Additionally the project will develop a cost formula that can be applied to other counties in the state and that will provide a research framework and questions that can be used by other counties. The project aims to answer four broad research questions:

1. What types of child protection cases are best suited for resolution through mediation?
2. When in the life-cycle of a case is the optimal time for mediation to occur?
3. How are outcomes affected by mediation, including the legal resolution of the case, child wellbeing, and time to permanency?
4. Is mediation a cost-effective strategy for resolving child protection cases?

Another goal of the project is to determine the costs of mediation, which will be measured by the full costs associated with cases that are resolved prior to mediation, at mediation, and at trial and include all real costs paid by the courts and departments to prepare and service the case, in addition to the cost of mediation, foster care placement, and any other relevant costs.

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The desired result is an evidence-based analysis best practices in mediation and whether mediation in child protection cases is a more cost effective strategy than going to trial without mediation, and whether mediation can be associated with a shorter time to permanency and case resolution.

FEDERAL CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW (CFSR)

The federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) is scheduled for June 2016. The CFSR is a federal audit of a state's child welfare system including the judicial system. Part of the review process requires a statewide assessment conducted by staff of the child welfare agency, representatives selected by DFPS who are also involved in the development of the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) and other child welfare stakeholders. Information gathered as part of the statewide assessment is used by the federal government to determine whether the state is in substantial conformity with the seven outcomes and seven systemic factors used to measure conformity with Title IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act. The Children's Commission facilitated the required stakeholder input by hosting stakeholder meetings for three groups in late 2014 / early 2015, focusing on the Texas Case Review System, Service Array and Agency Response to Community, and Foster/Adoption Licensing, Recruitment and Retention. Concerns noted about each area have been submitted to the federal Administration of Children and Families.

PROTECT OUR KIDS COMMISSION SUPPORT

The Protect Our Kids Commission was established by Senate Bill 66 during the 83rd Legislative Session and is charged with studying the relationship between child welfare and child fatalities and must submit a report to the Legislature no later than December 1, 2015. In 2014, the Children's Commission provided administrative and meeting support to the POK commission and collaborated with members from the House Select Committee on Child Deaths, the State Child Death Review Team, the DFPS Office of Child Safety, and various stakeholder organizations. The POK held one meeting in October 2014 with several more scheduled for 2015. Judge Robin Sage (Children's Commission JIR) was appointed by Governor Rick Perry to lead the POK as its chair. The POK will issue a report to the Governor, Lt. Governor, and Speaker of the House in December 2015.

TEXAS BLUEPRINT: IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE

In 2010, the Supreme Court of Texas established an Education Committee to identify contributing factors and potential solutions to address the poor educational outcomes of children and youth in foster care. Following 18 months of statewide collaboration that included over 100 stakeholders, the Education Committee released the *Texas Blueprint: Transforming Education Outcomes for Children and Youth in Foster Care* ("Texas Blueprint") in 2012. The *Texas Blueprint* Implementation Task Force ("Task Force") was charged with the prioritization of over 125 *Texas Blueprint* recommendations and the first phase of implementation ran through December 2014 ("Phase I"). During Phase I, the Task Force created the Data and Information Sharing, School Stability, and Training and Resources Workgroups. Members of the three workgroups and

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the Task Force worked closely together over the two-year implementation period and addressed over 80% of the *Texas Blueprint* recommendations in whole or in part.

The accomplishments of Phase I can be categorized as legislative, training, tools, data, and agency resources, some highlights of which include:

- Education Decision Maker provisions in the law;
- Texas' first Foster Care and Education Summit;
- Development of the *Foster Care and Student Success Resource Guide*;
- Creation of the *Texas CASA Educational Advocacy Toolkit*;
- Amendment of a data sharing Memorandum Of Understanding between the Department of Family and Protective Services ("DFPS") and the Texas Education Agency ("TEA");
- Development of a more in-depth data exchange, including formulation of more specific data elements; and
- Significant dedication of staff time and resources at the TEA, DFPS, Children's Commission, Texas Association of School Boards, and other organizations.

In February 2015, the Children's Commission approved the creation of a standing Foster Care and Education Committee to be comprised of cross-system, multi-disciplinary, and diverse membership. The first committee meeting is scheduled for July 2015 when the committee will begin to define a shared mission, clarify committee objectives, and develop a working structure.

Training Projects

The Children's Commission promotes judicial leadership to improve the administration of justice in child protection cases through training initiatives. Due to the specialized judicial expertise required for judges hearing child protection cases, training efforts are focused on ensuring training curriculum improves judicial knowledge on best practices related to safety, permanency and well-being, identifies and promotes best practices to improve outcomes affecting safety, permanency, and well-being in child protection cases, and increase judicial knowledge and expertise in the handling of child protection cases.

JUDICIAL EDUCATION

Eighth annual Child Welfare Judicial Conference

This conference occurred on June 9-11, 2014 in Bastrop, Texas with over 75 judges attending. The Child Protection Court judges also held their annual meeting in conjunction with the conference. The conference had an overall theme of well-being of not only the children and families involved in CPS cases but also of the judges who hear the cases.

Judicial Scholarships to Attend the NCJFCJ Annual Conference

In July 2014, a number of Texas judges attended the annual NCJFCJ conference in Chicago on full scholarships offered by the Children's Commission.

Child Welfare Track at Family Violence Judicial Conference

The Children's Commission also sponsored a child welfare track at the Family Violence Judicial Conference, which targeted district and county court at law judges throughout the state.

ATTORNEY EDUCATION

Attorney Ad Litem Appointment Eligibility & Online Training Webinars on CPS Issues

In partnership with the Children's Commission, the State Bar created an online child protection library, which offers the following online courses to court-appointed attorneys and state and DFPS attorneys:

- Advocating for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care
- Resources and Processes for Representing Crossover Youth with Disabilities
- Special Education Advocacy for Kids in the Foster Care System
- Representing Teen Parents in CPS Cases
- Practice Tips on Representing Children
- Representing Parents in CPS Cases

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- Preserving Error and Appeals Issues in CPS cases
- Representing Children in CPS Cases, Updated July 2013
- Trial Skills in the CPS Case

The webinars entitled Representing Parents in CPS Cases and Representing Children in CPS Cases meet the statutorily required minimum 3 hours of CLE for attorneys seeking to be qualified to take CPS appointments.

In late 2014, at the Children's Commission's request, the State Bar also added the video of the Child Abuse and Neglect One-Day Workshop CLE to the library. The SBOT also offered to set aside one day of studio time every year for the Commission to use to tape webinars, without charge to the Commission. The SBOT's online library of CPS-related webinars costs \$25.00 per webinar for any attorney who accepts appointments for the legal representation of children and parents, and who represent the DFPS. The Children's Commission offers scholarships available through the Commission and through the Bar for attorneys who need financial assistance to access this online training.

Attorney Scholarships

The Children's Commission coordinated scholarships for two annual CLEs:

- The State Bar of Texas (SBOT) Child Abuse and Neglect 1-Day Workshop in San Antonio, Texas, on August 6th: 98 scholarships were awarded. Highlights from the survey results collected: 76% of those responding would not have attended without a scholarship; 90% of the respondents reported a better understanding of a child welfare law, policy, or practice as a result of the training; and 65% of respondents reported being familiar with ICWA (a much greater percentage than last year's survey results).
- NACC Annual Conference in Denver, Colorado, from August 18-20th, where 6 newly minted Texas Child Welfare Law Specialists received \$1102 apiece to cover conference registration, plus reimbursement at the state rate for 3 nights at the conference hotel and 3 days' worth of meals.
- They completed a pre-conference survey and a post-conference survey to help us track any practice changes that were a result of the conference. Survey results will be shared when compiled.

NACC Fee Waivers for Child Welfare Specialist Exam

The Children's Commission offered a reimbursement of the \$350 certification exam fee for Texas attorneys and judges who qualified to sit for the NACC's Child Welfare Specialist Exam. Of those who qualified to take the exam in 2014, six from Texas passed the exam successfully. Sixteen Texas attorneys have been approved to take the CWLS exam in 2015.

TRAINING PROJECTS

Trial Skills Training

In 2010 and under the leadership of Justice Michael Massengale, 1st Court of Appeals, Houston, the Children's Commission began developing a hands-on trial skills training program designed to assist all attorneys working on the CPS dockets across the state. Since October 2013, the Children's Commission has offered its Trial Skills Training course to parent, child, and state's attorneys twice yearly. This three-day intensive Training is based on a fictional Texas CPS case and breaks down the teaching of litigation skills by lecturing, demonstrating, strategizing, and practicing in all areas of trial preparation. Many highly respected attorneys and judges act as volunteer faculty members, and live witnesses are included for a unique, robust, and effective training. Feedback on the training has been very positive. In the words of retired District Court Judge Jean Boyd, in Fort Worth, "All of the attorneys and prosecutors from my jurisdiction who participated in the Commission's Trial Skills Training have said it is the best training they have ever received. They feel they are much better advocates as a result and they have clearly demonstrated this to be true in the courtroom."

State Bar of Texas Child Abuse and Neglect Committee

The CAN Committee hosted the 1-Day Child Abuse and Neglect Workshop mentioned above, and also used \$10,000 of training funds from the Children's Commission to support their Child Welfare Law Conference in June, which was held in connection with the annual Keeping Infants and Toddlers Safe (KITS) conference.

DFPS Attorney Training

The Department of Family and Protective Services received \$2,500 in CIP funds to train their regional attorneys in November of 2014.

Texas CASA Training

CASA's 2014 training projects focused on increased understanding of the impact of trauma and understanding and awareness of proven strategies and interventions provided in the TBRI (Trust Based Relational Intervention) model of treatment to help CASA volunteers, CPS caseworkers, attorneys, judges, placement providers, therapeutic providers, kinship and families implement strategies that positively impact well-being and permanency outcomes. Texas CASA also began an examination of how TBRI fits into the broader goal of creating a statewide trauma-informed system. In 2015, CASA will work closely with the Travis County Collaborative and the TCU Institute for Child Development, continuing the work of the Texas CASA Mental Health Task Force, utilizing the training efforts and outcomes TBRI "educators", and engaging with other state and nationally recognized trauma experts. Texas CASA will develop a report of recommendations and information regarding trauma informed practice and the intersections with TBRI that offer greatest opportunity to improve child outcomes. Ultimately, the project will yield an increased awareness among child welfare stakeholders, and CASA volunteers specifically, about trauma informed care and TBRI.

Data & Technology Projects

Notice & Engagement Web Application

The project involves using non-confidential case data to provide notice to parties and interested persons about upcoming hearings, and is distributed via email. In early 2014, the Children’s Commission sent an announcement to all Child Protection Courts and three child placing agency partners advising of the Child Protective Services Hearing Notification tool advising that the service was available. Once a profile or user account has been created, the user can search for cases to which they are assigned or interested. The case search page requires at least part of the parent, adoptive parent or guardian’s last name, and the exact spelling of the child’s first and last name as well as the county where the suit is filed. The search will look for open cases and display a Summary of Upcoming Hearing Dates. The results will also display a Summary of All Open Cases regardless of whether a hearing has been scheduled or not. The summary can be printed out or can be sent to the user via email. A user can remove a case from their notification profile by simply clicking the “remove” link next to the case information. The user has the option to receive notices 1, 3, 7, 14, and / or 30 days in advance of any hearing scheduled. In 2014, there were 226 users, including Adoptive Parent, CASA Volunteers, Case Workers, Foster Parents, Guardians, Guardians Ad Litem, Possessory Conservators, Relatives, Volunteer Advocates, and Attorneys. The system had sent out 427 notices on 396 separate hearings.

Video Conferencing

The video conferencing project enables children involved in child abuse and neglect cases to participate in permanency and placement review hearings without them being physically present in the courtroom. OCA hosts and supports the hardware and software required to facilitate video conferencing between courts and residential placements. OCA provides a “how to” for use by Courts and other stakeholders who wish to use video conferencing for a particular hearing. OCA also maintains a log of all hearings conducted, and a list of Residential Treatment Centers with video conferencing capability as well as a list of courts. There are over 50 residential treatment facilities and 20 courts, and over 280 hearings were hosted by OCA in 2014.

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