

Judicial Trauma Institute

Post-Conference Follow up on Q&A

Session 8: Implementation and Sustaining the Effort

Note: All answers were provided directly from session speakers as noted.

I heard earlier about social media. Have you used social media? How do you involve your community?

Justice Byrne's Answer: My associate judge at the time, Judge Aurora Martinez Jones, created a court Facebook page to keep litigants and counsels aware of matters on the docket. She and I both have Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn accounts wherein we highlight activities on our dockets, CLEs, initiatives and statewide issues impacting the law on our dockets.

Judge Sakai's Answer: I am definitely "old school." I have social media accounts for which I do not post, but only monitor for myself. My younger judicial colleagues are ardent users of social media and post extensively. I would refer you to the Collaborative Commission of Domestic Violence (CCDV) in San Antonio that uses Twitter and Facebook to interact with the community and get notices out to the public. It has been quite successful in engaging the community and creating awareness of domestic violence. A staff intern is in charge of those social media outlets.

What obstacles did you faced in implementing these programs? How did you encourage other courts to be open to your efforts?

Justice Byrne's Answer: Obstacles are usually bandwidth and resource limits, not the will of collaborative partners. We have been doing collaborative efforts systemically since 2008, and therefore have developed mutual trust and an appetite for system change and improvement initiatives with a proven track record of success. In that way, new initiatives are the norm and not the exception. As for my brothers and sisters on other courts, it was important to not surprise them with anything. Conducting regular CLEs for my brothers and sisters

on the bench regarding what we were doing on the CPS/Juvenile Justice docket helped with transparency and trust. Also, being supportive of my brothers and sisters on their dockets when they initiated system change work in their areas of expertise was helpful in having a trusting professional relationship.

Judge Sakai's Answer: The biggest obstacle in getting a program is funding especially if you have to go to your governmental entity such as Commissioners Court. What I have found to be the successful way to overcome the funding issue is to bring a collaboration and coordination of community partners who are directly involved in your initiative such as drug/alcohol treatment providers, mental health professionals, and domestic/family violence advocates that are involved with child welfare. It sets up a private/public partnership that has community buy in. You need to establish a stated purpose with data and metrics to support it. You need to put a business plan together that all will support and endorse. You need to specify your goals and standards. You should also keep your fellow judges apprised but remember that too many chiefs can spoil the deal.

Who coordinates the services for a party who is suffering from a substance use disorder, domestic violence, mental health issues, etc.? The service providers all think that their services should be addressed first.

Justice Byrne's Answer: Our first coordinator is the CPS worker. Oftentimes the suggestions and voice of CASA helps in prioritizing the services for the parent. Also, the attorney for the parent through their advocacy helps in coordination of services. If the parent is in our Family Treatment Drug Court program, there is a court coordinator who actively works with the service providers to coordinate services for the parent.

Judge Sakai's Answer: Typically, in a CPS case, the CPS caseworker establishes the family service plan which lays out all the services and tasks required of the parents. Of course, the judge should always review said plan with everyone involved so that it is not a "cookie cutter" plan or has irrelevant or inapplicable requirements. In my Family Drug Court, I require that the required services must be established by a team of all the professionals who come together in staffing to make sure family service plans are carefully tailored and meet the needs of the families and their children. I often find psychological evaluations as being overly

prescribed and they usually are filed away and not referred to in the case. Or requiring drug assessments when there is no documentation of drug/alcohol use. I have eliminated the use of anger management classes to address the domestic/family violence issues in a family. I require certified Batterers Intervention & Prevention Programs (BIPP) for these families. I have learned over the years that some individuals need to be met where they are at in terms of limited skill sets or capacity issues. Sometimes they can only do one thing at a time. A severely traumatized person can move forward only after intensive counseling and coaching first. I think that the judge has a key role to determine the needs and the issues of the families that come before it. I think that it is more important than making rulings except perhaps, for the decisions on the final hearings.