

The Supreme Court of Ohio

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor

CC: Michael L. Buenger, Administrative Director
Stephanie Hess, Director, Deputy Administrative Director

FROM: Judge Matt C. Staley, Allen County Domestic Relations Court
Co-Chair of the Advisory Committee on Children and Families

DATE: January 3, 2017

SUBJECT: 2016 Annual Report on the Advisory Committee on Children and Families

In compliance with the Operating Guidelines for the Advisory Committee on Children and Families, we are pleased to present our annual summary detailing the Committee's activities and accomplishments during 2016.

The Advisory Committee was created in 2002 with the purpose to provide ongoing advice to the Court and its staff regarding the promotion of statewide rules and uniform standards concerning the establishment and operation of programs for children and families in Ohio courts, the development and delivery of services to Ohio courts on matters involving children and families, including training programs for judges and court personnel, and the consideration of any other issues the advisory committee deems necessary to assist the Court and its staff regarding children and families in Ohio courts. The Advisory Committee on Children and Families has continued to be an active body. Detailed below, the activities have continued to address a broad spectrum of issues including child protection, kinship care, adult guardianship, and domestic relations and juvenile rules.

The Subcommittee on Responding to Child Abuse, Neglect, and Dependency (CAND), chaired by Director Pam Meermans, Clark County Job and Family Services, continued its work on the Ohio Differential Response Project and implementation of the Safe and Together training model. CAND identified a need for abuse, neglect, and dependency caseflow and Child and Family Services Review multidisciplinary training which was held in four regions in April and May of 2016. CAND also identified areas of focus - pieces of the Children in Need of Protective Services (CHIPS) legislation and parent representation. The Juvenile Guardian ad Litem (GAL) workgroup met with the Domestic Relations GAL Workgroup to discuss similarities and differences. The Courts' Response to Trafficking of Children Workgroup, chaired by Judge Denise Cubbon, Lucas County Juvenile Court, met to address juvenile courts' response to human trafficking of children in Ohio, and developed two bench cards – one on human trafficking and another on trauma-informed court practices. A new Judicial Fostering Connections Workgroup met to guide the Ohio Department of Job and Family

Services on the process of extending Title IV-E benefits to youth ages 18 through 21 who are in the custody of the public children services agency at age 18 passed through House Bill 50.

The Subcommittee on Family Law Reform Implementation, co-chaired by Chief Magistrate Serpil Ergun, Cuyahoga County Domestic Relations Court, and Judge Matt C. Staley, Allen County Domestic Relations Court, was formed to implement recommendations from the Advisory Committee's 2005 Report and Recommendations on Family Law Reform. The Domestic Relations (DR) Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Workgroup reviewed Sup.R. 48 regarding guardians ad litem in domestic relations cases and has drafted amendments to the rule. The workgroup has met with the Juvenile GAL Workgroup to discuss options. The Legislative Reform Workgroup has been meeting to focus on R.C. 3109.04 language that reflects the continuing roles and responsibilities of both parents when they are not living together, and to make Ohio's statutes involving parenting issues more child-centered.

The Subcommittee on Adult Guardianship, chaired by Judge Dixilene Park, Stark County Probate Court, was formed to make recommendations for standards of practice, data collection, and monitoring protocols in adult guardianship matters. The Judicial College has educated many guardians regionally across Ohio. Another small workgroup planned the Ohio Guardianship Summit held at the Doubletree Worthington on March 22, 2016. Probate judges attended with their local teams and worked on plans to enhance local guardianship practices.

The Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice was formed in 2015. Juvenile Restraint Sup.R. 5.01 was adopted and effective on July 1, 2016. This rule requires local courts to adopt a local rule banning indiscriminate shackling of youth in courtroom proceedings. Also, bench cards have been drafted and are being edited to support new local judges on juvenile justice. A survey was sent to courts across the state for local courts to identify their promising practices which will be compiled and shared with the courts. Additionally, issues to explore and for education were identified on the survey as well. Finally, Ohio was one of five states awarded scholarships and attended an academy in November focusing on best practices in response to status offenses sponsored by the Vera Institute.

Thank you for your support and the continued opportunity to improve the delivery of court services to Ohio's children and families. We welcome your feedback and suggestions on the Advisory Committee's work.