

The Supreme Court of Ohio

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor

CC: Stephanie Hess, Director, Interim Administrative Director
Stephanie Graubner Nelson, Director, Court Services

FROM: Judge Matt C. Staley, Allen County Domestic Relations Court
Judge Denise Herman McColley, Henry County Family Court
Co-Chairs of the Advisory Committee on Children and Families
David Edelblute, Manager, Children and Families Section

DATE: January 14, 2019

SUBJECT: 2018 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 Advisory Committee's activities and accomplishments during 2018.

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, these activities seek 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), was chaired by Director Pam Meermans, Clark County Job and Family Services. Ms. Meermans retired in 2018, her last CAND meeting was May, 23, 2018. The Advisory Committee has identified Judge Anthony Capizzi the Montgomery County Juvenile Court and Deputy Director Carla Carpenter from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services as the new co-chairs of the subcommittee. CAND remains focused on the Children in Need of Protective Services (CHIPS) legislation. A CHIPS Workgroup is being formed which will be chaired by Judge Matt Puskarich, Harrison County Juvenile Court. CAND continues to see a need for abuse, neglect, and dependency caseload training. CAND is hosting a Dependency Caseload course in March 2019, with a focus on courts who have not yet attended. Additionally a new Child and Family Services Review /Quality Hearing Workgroup was formed in December of 2018, chaired by Magistrate Michelle Edgar, Fairfield County Juvenile Court, to respond

to the ongoing need of courts and child welfare agencies to work together to improve family outcomes, with a focus on improving hearings timeliness and quality. The Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) is the federal review that is periodically conducted to ensure conformity with federal child welfare requirements, while gauging the experiences of children, youth, and families receiving state child welfare services. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services is in the process of preparing their Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to respond to the 2017 review by the Children's Bureau of Health and Human Services. CAND is actively working with ODJFS in the development of this plan.

CAND also serves as the steering committee for the Supreme Court of Ohio's Court Improvement Plan (CIP), federal grant as well as ODJFS's Children's Justice Act (CJA). Both grants are issued by the Children's Bureau of the Department of Health and Human Services. In addition the Supreme Court CIP applied for and was awarded the National Quality Improvement Center for Collaborative Community Court Teams (QIC-CCCT) grant in 2018. Fifteen demonstration sites were selected nationwide, with three of those sites, Trumbull, Coshocton and Fairfield counties, selected from Ohio. CAND is one of the oversight committees for this project. QIC-CCCT is a 30-month initiative providing funding and support through training and technical assistance to strengthen the community's collaborative capacity to improve services and outcomes for infants, young children, and their families/caregivers affected by substance use. This initiative will enhance the capacity of these teams to implement the provisions of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act 2016 amendments to the Child Abuse and Prevention Treatment Act. The QIC-CCCT is funded by the Children's Bureau and is managed by Children and Family Futures. The project is provided evaluation assistance from Advocates for Human Potential in Massachusetts.

In 2018 Congress passed the Family First Prevention Act (FFPSA). The Supreme Court of Ohio is currently represented on the ODJFS State FFPSA Leadership Team, which is planning the implementation of the federal act in Ohio. In addition, CAND has agreed to form a workgroup that will focus on FFPSA and the judiciary's role in its implementation.

CAND's annual multidisciplinary juvenile court training was held in April 2018, and focused on collaborative practices. The juvenile judge led teams focused on creating a standard language of risk and safety, parent representation to expedite permanency, and working with substance abusing families. Each team created an action plan on how to work together collaboratively to move towards permanency. Two counties, Union and Hamilton, applied and received technical assistance scholarships to work with Terese Roe Lund from Action for Child Protection, the keynote speaker, to implement a more collaborative approach.

In December 2017, ODJFS launched the Bridges initiative. Bridges is a voluntary program available to young adults who left foster care in Ohio at ages 18, 19 or 20 and who are in school, working, participating in an employment program, or have a medical condition that prevents them from going to school or working. The program provides guidance and support as they transition into adulthood. In January of 2018, CAND released a Bridges Program Toolkit for judicial use. CAND continues to work with ODJFS as the program continues to grow and serve on the Bridges steering committee.

Finally, the Juvenile Guardian ad Litem (GAL) workgroup met with the Domestic Relations GAL Workgroup. The revised Sup.R. 48 passed the Commission on the Rules of Superintendence on June 16, 2017 and was approved to be published for public comment by the Justices on October 17. The public comment period began on November 6 through December 7, 2017. The rule has been revised,

based upon public comment, and the revised version will be presented at the January, 2019 Advisory Committee meeting.

The Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice was formed in 2015 and is chaired by Judge Beth Gill, Franklin County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court. The first Juvenile Justice Bench Cards were adopted and released this year to all of Ohio's juvenile courts. The Juvenile Justice Subcommittee is focusing on three primary areas: diversion recognition program based on evidence and research; education on racial and ethnic disparities with a focus of a joint Department of Youth Services and Supreme Court training for judicial officers and court personnel; and revision of Juvenile Rule of Procedure 3, which will expand the availability to counsel for juveniles facing misdemeanor and unruly complaints.

CAND and the Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice worked jointly on two projects in 2018. The Workgroup on Juvenile Justice in Child Welfare began in June of 2017. The charge was to review and make recommendations on child welfare assessment and planning tools to make them relevant for juveniles in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. The Workgroup also made recommendations on training for staff working with this population. The Workgroup has completed their recommendations and will present them to the Advisory Committee in January. These two Subcommittees will continue their work on this population. In 2018, the Subcommittees determined that the topic of the 2019 annual multidisciplinary training will be juveniles involved in child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

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 GAL Workgroup reviewed Sup.R. 48 regarding Guardians ad Litem in domestic relations cases and met with the Juvenile GAL Workgroup as mentioned supra. Also, the Legislative Reform Workgroup met 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. A new workgroup that focuses on developing custody evaluator standards for Ohio is in the same vein as GAL standards function.

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. Two small workgroups: Developmental Disabilities Workgroup is planning a toolkit; and the Adult Protective Services (APS) Workgroup held a pre-conference last summer for the Ohio Association of Probate Judges to attend with their local teams and to work on plans to enhance local APS collaborative practices. A toolkit based upon this training will be released early in 2019. A new workgroup that focuses on the monitoring of guardianships was formed in 2018. It is being led by Magistrate Patricia Hider of the Butler County Probate Court.

Finally, the Advisory Committee began work on a Probate Court Desktop Guide which should be released later in 2019. 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.