

Best Practice Court Matters

An update on the latest events of Best Practice Courts of Virginia
Court Improvement Program
Office of the Executive Secretary
Supreme Court of Virginia

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Class of 2010 Best Practice Courts Conference November 16-17, 2010

The Class of 2010 Best Practice Courts Conference was held November 16-17, 2010, at the Hilton Richmond Hotel. Six new teams from across the Commonwealth were welcomed into the Best Practice Court Program with 36 participants in attendance. Six Lead Judges from existing Best Practice Courts served as mentors for the new teams.

Lelia Hopper, Court Improvement Program Director, began the conference by welcoming the new Best Practice Court teams and sharing what they might expect to learn from being a part of this initiative. The new teams were assured that they are not expected to know all there is to know at this point, and that everyone was present to learn from one another. The goal of the conference was to get them excited and energized by what they learn and to develop new ideas to take home for improved court practices.

*"Coming together is beginning,
talking together is a process,
and working together is success."
~Henry Ford*

Judge Ellen White and Judge William Sharp led the following plenary session and offered an insightful lesson on judicial leadership and the importance

of community collaboration for the children and families we serve. The speakers shared with the teams the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges' *Technical Assistance Bulletin*, April 2004, on



Back row, left to right: Sherry Kramer, CASA, New River Valley; Hon. David O'Donnell, Judge, Harrisonburg/Rockingham JDR Court; Hon. Elizabeth Kellas, Judge, Winchester/Frederick JDR Court. Front row, left to right: Nancy Massie, Clerk, Nelson JDR Court; Wayne Emery, Richmond Co. DSS Counsel; Andy Crawford, Franklin Co. DSS; Damie Carter, GAL, Lee Co.

building a better collaboration and the components necessary for effective leadership to facilitate and support systems change.

"Improved Court Processes: Best Practices of Participating Courts," was a plenary session moderated by Judge Robert Brewbaker, and included a panel of judges and the Chief Operating Officer of Richmond City JDR Court. These panelists related how they are improving their court practices through their involvement in the Best Practice Court Program and locally driven efforts.

The final plenary session of the day highlighted two presenta-

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Introducing the Class of 2010

The Lead Judges from JDR Courts for the Class of 2010 Best Practice Courts are:

Franklin County

Hon. Sarah Rice;

Montgomery County

Hon. Marcus Long;

Lee County

Hon. Jeffrey Hamilton;

Harrisonburg/Rockingham

Hon. David O'Donnell;

Nelson County

Hon. Kenneth Farrar;

Richmond County

Hon. Michael McKenney.

Mini-Grants 2010-2011

The Court Improvement Program instituted a program in 2006 to provide each of the Best Practice Courts with mini-grants. These funds have been used to develop a local training event or new initiative either individually or in conjunction with another Best Practice Court or to conduct a Team Retreat to assess local progress and plan future activities.

This successful program was announced again in July 2010 and concludes June 30, 2011. These mini-grants are made possible by federal funds through the CIP Training Grant. This newsletter highlights activities of some of the early efforts of the Best Practice Courts to use these mini-grants to enhance local collaboration and improved court practice. See page 3 for details about these local initiatives. ✧

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tions, *The PDSA Method: Collaborating for Permanency One Step at a Time*, an initiative of the Fairfax Best Practice Court team, and *Pathway to Permanency*, one of numerous initiatives of the Hampton Best Practice Court team. Judge Teena Grodner and Judge Jay Dugger shared their local efforts with conference participants. Judge Florence Powell moderated the panel.

The second day of the conference opened with a plenary session, "Resources Available to Best Practice Courts," led by



Judge Stephen Rideout, CIP Judicial Consultant
Paul McWhinney, Va. Dept. of Social Services

Lelia Hopper. She shared with the new teams valuable resources CIP has available to support their local work. Judge Stephen Rideout, Judicial Consultant to CIP, and Paul McWhinney from the Virginia Department of Social Services, added to the resources available to these teams.

As in years past, the new Best Practice Court teams met in groups by professional designation. In these meetings, groups discuss implications of collaboration among community entities with responsibilities for meeting the needs of children and families involved in child dependency cases. Judge Frank Somerville led a lively discussion among the 12 JDR judges in attendance. The teams re-

turned to the Ballroom where each group's designated panelist shared key points of the group's discussion in a "Leadership at the Local Level Panel", moderated by Judge Elizabeth Kellas. (Panel members are pictured on page one.)

Justice William C. Mims, Supreme Court of Virginia, delighted conference participants with his knowledge of their work and personal stories of his involvement with young people in his professional career as he concluded the second day's morning session. He spoke of using purpose, persuasion, and power to benefit vulnerable children and families. Justice Mims elaborated on the importance of team members working together to persuade each other and other community stakeholders who serve court-involved children and families to work cooperatively to improve how the system functions.

Lastly, Justice Mims explained that when persuasion does not work with parents and families, the power of the local department of social services to seek protective orders or remove children from their parents can be required. Best Practice Court teams need to focus on assuring that the power of the court is utilized in a way that is compliant with state and federal law and best practices to assure the



Justice William C. Mims
Supreme Court of Virginia of Virginia

safety of vulnerable children and permanency for children who enter the foster care system.

The closing session, "Planning for the Future," wrapped up the conference and provided an opportunity for court teams to share their plans for future activities and the resources they need to accomplish these initiatives. ✧

Child Abuse and Neglect Institute June 20-24, 2011

Since the early 2000's, CIP has funded the attendance of 34 Virginia Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court judges at the Child Abuse and Neglect Institute sponsored by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. This year, CIP is pleased to be able to send 5 Virginia JDR judges to this excellent five-day training in Reno, Nevada. Currently, 4 judges have registered for the event. If you are interested in attending, please contact Jane Wiggins at jwiggins@courts.state.va.us. ✧

Helpful Resources...

...just to name a few:

- Table of Appeals of Termination of Parental Rights Cases to the Court of Appeals of Virginia
- Foster Care Demographic Reports by Locality
- Analysis of Abuse, Neglect and Foster Care Reports (Effort to be resumed following the conversion of the Abuse, Neglect, and Foster Care Reports to JAVA Reports.)
- A Handbook for Parents and Guardians in Child Dependency Cases
- Information about the Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) for Children Program

For information on these and other resources, please contact a member of CIP staff. ✧

**Best Practice Court
Local Team Initiatives**

Wise County Best Practice Court Team held its local training event in August 2010. Judges Elizabeth Wills and Jeff Hamilton opened the event that focused on Juvenile Sex Offenders and Asperger's Syndrome. After lunch, attendees heard from a panel of foster care children and foster family members. The program closed with a GAL panel discussion.

Tazewell and Pulaski Best Practice Court Teams conducted a joint team training in



Hon. Henry Barringer, Judge, Tazewell JDR Court; Nancie Kie, Esq.; Dawn Viers, Ph.D., New River Valley Community Services; Hon. Lee Chitwood, Judge, Pulaski Co. JDR Court

October 2010 with community leaders and service providers in attendance. Keynote speaker, Nancie Kie, Esq., a guardian ad litem for children and former foster child, spoke on how each worker can make a difference in a child's life. Mental health issues were also at the forefront of this training, with the topics of developmental trauma and regulatory problems in children addressed. Attending GALs received helpful practice tips from Judge Louis Harrison, Bedford J&DR Court, on trial preparation and other useful techniques. The training ended with Assistant Ethics Counsel, Virginia State Bar's Barbara Saunders, on ethical considerations when serving as a GAL.

Winchester/Frederick Best Practice Court Team sponsored a 3-hour training last October for community stakeholders on "The Role of the Lawyer in the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court." Judge Elizabeth Kellas, Winchester/Frederick J&DR Court, presented on the legal authority authorizing Family Engagement, purpose and intent of the Juvenile Code, Comprehensive Services Act and dispositional alternatives. Gwen Monroe, Director of Frederick Social Services, provided a history lesson on the local implementation of Systems of Care for Court-Involved Youth. Presentations followed on the topic of Systems of Care, with Judge Kellas sharing final remarks on the future role of attorneys in this practice model.

Louisa Best Practice Court Team held a Retreat in October 2010, where attendees received an update from Lt. Howard Porter, Louisa Drug Task Force, who discussed synthetic marijuana, among other drugs. Morning sessions also covered the Truancy Review Team, Family Engagement and Foster Care Prevention. In the afternoon, participants of the Core Group heard Dr. Anne Kisor, Louisa DSS, speak on the subject of Operational Evaluation and then developed a plan of action for future team activities.



Hon. Susan Whitlock, Louisa JDR Court; Dale Mullen, Louisa Co. Manager; Deborah Pettit, Louisa Superintendent of Schools; Deborah Tinsley, Esq.; Cathy Law, Louisa Co. Public Schools

Roanoke County and City Best Practice Court Teams engaged Norma Ginther, Consulting & Training, LLC, Columbus, Ohio, to speak on the topic of "Separation, Placement and the



Dr. Betty McCreary, Roanoke Co. DSS; Hon. Philip Trompeter, Roanoke Co. JDR Court; Norma Ginther

Grief Cycle in Child Protective Services." Stakeholders at the local training event included JDR judges, DSS representatives, GALs, DJJ representatives, private practitioners and schools. During a working lunch, disciplines sat together to discuss how the information from the training will be applied in their work and how the information will be used to develop strategies in individual service planning for children, especially through the foster care service plan.

Campbell County's Best Practice Court Team holds quarterly trainings for community stakeholders and service providers. Trainings were held in March, June and September 2010, and again in January of this year. Topics covered at these quarterly trainings have included:

- Comprehensive Services Act
- FAPT
- Special Education Services
- School-Based Mental Health Programs
- Child Protective Services
- Foster Care/Adoption Unit
- Roles of Attorneys
- Ethical Issues Involving GALs ♦

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BEST PRACTICE COURTS OF VIRGINIA

Alexandria	Lee	Stafford
Amherst	Loudoun	Staunton/Augusta
Bedford	Louisa	Suffolk
Campbell	Montgomery	Tazewell
Charlottesville/Albemarle	Nelson	Virginia Beach
Chesapeake	Newport News	Warren
Culpeper	Northampton	Washington/Bristol
Fairfax	Pulaski	Waynesboro
Franklin Co.	Richmond City	Williamsburg/James City
Fredericksburg	Richmond County	Winchester/Frederick
Hampton	Roanoke City	Wise/Norton
Harrisonburg/Rockingham	Roanoke County/Salem	
Henrico	Smyth	

**National CASA Conference
 March 20-22, 2011**

Annually, more than 1,400 people attend the National CASA Conference, including Court Appointed Special Advocate staff, volunteers and board members, guardians ad litem, judges, attorneys and other child welfare professionals. The conference provides an opportunity to gather with peers and learn from outstanding leaders in the field of child advocacy.

Federal grant funds from the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services enable CIP this year to send 45 full-time CASA staff to this conference in Chicago. CIP is pleased to provide this unique training opportunity for these essential child advocates who participate in 25 Best Practice Court teams. ✧

**2011 Calendar of Events
 LTE—Local Training Event**

March 8	Alexandria BPC Team, LTE
March 20-22	National CASA Conference, Chicago, Illinois
April 4	Culpeper BPC Team, LTE
April 6	Winchester/Frederick BPC Team, LTE
April 8	Stafford BPC Team, LTE
April 12-13	CIP Conference for JDR Judges and Retired JDR Judges
April 14	Staunton/Augusta/Waynesboro BPC Teams, LTE
April 15	Campbell/Bedford/Amherst BPC Teams, LTE
May 3	Loudoun Co. BPC Team, LTE
May 6	Hampton BPC Team, LTE
May 6	Virginia Beach BPC Team, LTE
June 17	Newport News/Williamsburg/James City BPC Teams, LTE
June 20-24	NCJFCJ Child Abuse and Neglect Institute, Reno, NV
June 29	Charlottesville/Albemarle/Nelson BPC Teams, LTE
July 24-27	NCJFCJ 74th Annual National Conference, NY City, NY
August 10	Judicial Conference - CIP Day for All JDR Judges
September 8-9	Sixth Statewide Best Practice Courts Conference
September	CIP State Conference for Social Services Legal Counsel

CASA Cardboard Kids

CASA Cardboard kids were present at the Class of 2010 Best Practice Courts Conference, thanks to Sherry Kramer, New River Valley CASA. See the CASA cardboard child in the photo on page 1. ✧



Save the Date!

The Sixth Statewide Best Practice Courts Conference will be held **September 8-9, 2011**, at the Hilton Richmond Hotel in Short Pump. Representatives from each of Virginia's 37 Best Practice Court teams will be invited to attend. Invitations and additional details will be mailed to team members this summer.