



MONDAY MORNING MEMO

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National Consortium Focuses on Fair Treatment for Youth

The National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts held its 19th Annual Meeting May 2nd through the 5th in Brooklyn. This year's theme was "Saving Our Children: Justice and Fair Treatment of Youth in the Courts." At the meeting, Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye received the Franklin H. Williams Distinguished Service Award for her work on behalf of minority children and youth in New York State.

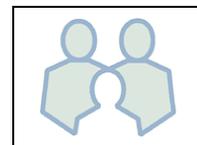
The conference featured presentations on research and model programs involving children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Plenary speaker Jeremy Travis, President of John Jay College of Criminal Justice, discussed the implications of disproportionate incarceration of black males. Some 32% of black males in this country can expect to serve time in a state or federal prison, but only 6% of white males. These high incarceration rates impact family stability, community resources, and governmental policy. For example, incarcerated adults are counted for the federal census in the community in which the prison is housed, rather than their home district. That means that funding allocated by census numbers continues to be drained from districts with high incarceration rates, often the poorest communities.

Hon. Judy A. Hartsfield, Presiding Judge of the 3rd Judicial Circuit Court, Juvenile Section, Detroit Michigan and **Gregory Owens**, Director of Special Projects at the NYS Office of Children and Family Services, presented on the disproportionate number of minority youth in the child welfare system. They showcased data showing that although there are no higher rates of abuse or neglect, African American and other minority children are more likely to be placed in out of home care, be in multiple out of home placements, spend more time in care, be placed in residential treatment facilities, become involved in the juvenile justice system, and be waived to adult courts. At the same time, they are less likely to be reunited with their birth parents. This disparity creates human and fiscal repercussions that must be addressed at the policy and front-line levels. Greg Owens and Darlene Ward will be presenting on this topic at the National CASA Conference this June in Orlando, FL.

For more information about the Consortium, go to www.consortiumonline.net/

Parent Education Assists Families in Divorce Proceedings

When in the middle of a separation or divorce, life can feel totally out of control. Sometimes the pain the adults are experiencing can prevent them from grasping that they do have a great deal of control over how the family situation is impacting their children.



The New York State Parent Education and Awareness Program is designed to teach divorcing or separating parents how they can reduce the stress their children are experiencing, and how they can foster and promote their children's healthy adjustment and development. Susan L. Pollet, Counsel and Director



of the program said, “I have a passion for the program because I see that it works, and the parents complain that they did not get this information earlier.” Susan was a legal presenter in the Westchester PEACE program, now one of the Program’s certified providers, in the 1990’s.

The Program was announced by Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye in her 2001 State of the Judiciary address with the goal of improving the quality of court outcomes involving children by institutionalizing parent education around the State. The development of the program was overseen by the 19-member Parent Education Advisory Board, chaired by Supreme Court Justice Evelyn Frazee. The Advisory Board, in its October, 2003 Report, set forth proposed guidelines, standards, and requirements for parent education programs to ensure that parent education programs receiving court referrals meet certain quality standards and offer participants information that is accurate, appropriate, and based on sound research. Under these guidelines, courts may make referrals only to certified parent education programs. There are currently 48 certified providers in New York State.

Four topics are addressed in the Parenting & Child Well-Being portion of the curriculum: 1) Creating and Maintaining Supportive Parent-Child Relationships; 2) Providing a Stable, Supportive Home Environment; 3) Maintaining Healthy Parental Functioning & Psychological Well-Being; and 4) Protecting Children from Ongoing Conflict Between Parents. There is also an overview of the Legal Process as it relates to divorce proceedings.

Parents attend the program separately, and are either referred by the courts or a local agency. In most instances, a parent can also self-refer. In order to participate, parents must have a child under the age of 18; be involved in a custody, visitation, divorce, separation, annulment or child support court action; and cannot have a pending family offense proceeding, criminal action involving the abuse of one parent by the other, or a temporary or permanent order of protection with a provision that one parent must stay away from the other.

It is estimated that 53-62% of all marriages in this country end in divorce and that 65% of divorces involve children. These statistics do not even address the number of children whose parents were never married and separate. While CASA programs focus on abuse and neglect cases and not custody, some of the administering agencies for local CASA programs also run custody advocacy programs. Program Director Susan Pollet urged those connected with CASA programs to encourage referrals to the program in order to benefit parents and children of separation and divorce.

For more information, visit www.nycourts.gov/ip/parent-ed or call toll-free 888-809-2798.

Resources

Office of ADR and CIP Launches Grant Review Service

The Office of Alternative Dispute Resolution and Court Improvement Programs last week notified programs of a new grant review service that will be offered to interested programs. Program directors may contact the Office of ADR and CIP and request assistance in conceptualizing a grant proposal to meet a funder’s priorities, editing narrative portions of the grant, or developing a grant application budget.



If you do not have a current or declined application you need assistance on at present, we would be happy to help you to develop some “boiler plate” language about your agency or program so that you are able to take advantage of future grant opportunities.

Interested CASA programs should contact Darlene Ward at daward@courts.state.ny.us for more information.

ICWA Resources Available on NYS OCFS Website

A number of resources on the Indian Child Welfare Act and its application in New York State are available on the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (NYS OCFS) website, www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/nas/. The site reviews state agency obligations to Native American children and families, and discusses the responsibilities of OCFS' Native American Services.

The most succinct resource is a Compliance Desk Aid, a two-page downloadable summary of the federal Act and relevant amendments to New York State Social Services Law and State Regulations: www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/publications/Pub5046.pdf. A more detailed Guide to Compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act in New York State, which includes specific legal and regulatory citations, can be found at: www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/publications/Pub4757GuideCompliance.pdf

A comprehensive history of Native Americans in New York State is on the same site at <http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/publications/Pub4629ProudHeritage.pdf>. A summary of the federal Act from the Tribal Law and Policy Institute is available through National CASA’s technical assistance website, www.casenet.org/download/tribal-casa/indian-child-welfare-act-summary.pdf

The A-Train

Save the Dates: Individual Donor Appeals Training Oct. 2-3

The Office of Alternative Dispute Resolution & Court Improvement Programs will sponsor the second in its series of resource development trainings for CASA Programs, Community Dispute Resolution Centers and Children’s Centers this fall. The training on *Individual Donor Appeals: The Cornerstone of Agency Fundraising* will be held Tuesday, October 2nd through Wednesday, October 3rd at the Holiday Inn in Saratoga Springs. Registration materials will be distributed this summer. (See attached flyer).

The featured presenter will be Board Development and Fundraising Consultant **P. Burke Keegan**, author of *Fundraising For Non-Profits: How to Build a Community Partnership*. The training will be structured to meet the needs identified in the online survey conducted by NYS UCS earlier this year. The training is geared towards program staff, board members and volunteers. Because of the importance of board involvement in individual donor cultivation, board members are particularly encouraged to attend.



~~~~~ **Success Stories** ~~~~~

***Jefferson County Seeks to “Clean Your Closets for CASA”***

Doing a fundraiser sometimes involves the Catch-22 of needing to raise funds in order to produce the fundraiser in the first place. This was the dilemma in which **Susan Kirkegaard** of CASA of Jefferson County found herself as she planned to produce a book of happy childhood memories to sell to raise funds for CASA.

Susan has a number of connections to help with writing and marketing the book, but publishing will require an outlay of funds. Susan, an E-Bay aficionado, creatively came up with the project of “Clean Your Closets for CASA” in order to raise seed money for the book concept. She registered on E-Bay’s charitable arm, Mission Fish ([www.missionfish.org](http://www.missionfish.org)) and has begun to gather donations primarily of clothing from the community.

“Everyone has something hanging in the back of their closet with the tags still on it,” Susan said. She selected clothes to sell as they are light and easiest to ship without worrying about damage, but has also sold CDs, games and other items that have been donated. The sales are handled through a Pay Pal account, so the bookkeeping is not a burden to the program. Susan personally handles the shipping.

The childhood memories book will focus on pleasant memories tied to sight, smell, sound, taste and touch. Contributions from around the state are welcome. “We hope that by bringing happy childhood memories to people we can help others to have a happy childhood,” Susan said.

Susan noted they do not have items on E-Bay this week, but in the future, if you would like to check out their wares, just enter their seller ID: “resolutioncenter.” For more information, contact Susan Kirkegaard at 315-785-0333 or [skirkegaard@resolution-center.net](mailto:skirkegaard@resolution-center.net).

~~~~~ **Quote of the Week** ~~~~~

“It is what we think we know already that often prevents us from learning.”

French physiologist Claude Bernard (1813 - 1878)

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