

Courts Catalyzing Change: Achieving Equity and Fairness in Foster Care Project Chronology: July 2007 to Date

- Jul 07** ■ The Advisory Committee of the Permanency Planning for Children Department (PPCD) of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) met at the NCJFCJ's annual conference in San Francisco, California and supported efforts by Casey Family Programs (CFP) and the NCJFCJ to focus on reducing racial disproportionality and disparities in the dependency court system.
- Sep 07** ■ CFP partners with the NCJFCJ to bring together judicial officers and other systems experts to set a national agenda for court-based training, research, and reform initiatives to reduce racial disproportionality and disparities in the dependency court system. This partnership builds on CFP's work in the Breakthrough Series Collaborative, successful Minority Over-Representation Model Court conferences in Chicago and Colorado, as well as the work of NCJFCJ committees on Diversity, Tribal Courts, and the Permanency Planning for Children Department's (PPCD) Disproportionate Representation of Minority Children in Out-of-Home Care Subcommittee.
- Oct 07** ■ The initiative was officially launched with a kick-off dinner and panel discussion at the National Model Court All-Sites Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana, October 3, 2007. The 31 participating dependency court jurisdictions in the NCJFCJ's Model Courts Project made a commitment to address racial disproportionality and disparities as a national model court goal.
- Nov 07** ■ A project Advisory Committee Meeting was held in Scottsdale, Arizona, November, 29, 2007, including judicial chairs of the PPCD's Disproportionate Representation of Minority Children in Out-of-Home Care Subcommittee, the NCJFCJ's Diversity Committee, and Tribal Courts Committee, as well as judges from CFP's Breakthrough Series Collaborative, staff from Casey-CSSP Alliance for Racial Equity, and NCJFCJ and CFP staff. At this meeting, the mission and goals of the project were agreed upon, a project Steering Committee was identified to provide leadership, members of a Call to Action Work Group were selected, and the project was officially named – *Courts Catalyzing Change: Achieving Equity and Fairness in Foster Care*.
- Dec 07** ■ To help inform discussions about the national agenda, an online survey with respect to data collection and measurement as well as telephone interviews with leading researchers, and a literature review was conducted. The goal of this effort was to identify key indicators to measure disproportionate representation and disparities for minority children and families.
- Feb 08** ■ A Steering Committee Meeting was held in Washington, D.C., February 6-7, 2008. Steering Committee members developed consensus/common language, core issues, critical messages, and materials to present to a convening of the Call to Action Work Group which will be tasked with developing the national agenda. The Steering Committee also developed the agenda for the Work Group Meeting to be held in March, 2008.

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- Mar 08** ❑ A Call to Action Work Group Meeting was held March 30-April 1, 2008 in Phoenix, Arizona. The Call to Action Work Group members (selected because of their leadership role in systems' change efforts and their expertise and involvement in efforts to reduce racial disproportionality and disparate treatment in the dependency court system) met to create a national agenda for court-based training, research and reform initiatives. Work Group members also began to identify strategies and tools for eliminating racial disproportionality and disparities.
- May 08** ❑ NCJFCJ Model Court Lead Judges met in Palm Springs, California May 13, 2008 to review and refine the National Agenda and to continue identifying the tools necessary to implement key strategies outlined in the Agenda. Continued commitments to implement strategies to reduce racial disproportionality and disparities in their Model Court jurisdictions were obtained from the Lead Judges.
- May 08** ❑ The Courts Catalyzing Change Steering Committee met on the heels of the Lead Judges Meeting in Palm Springs, California May 14, 2008. The Committee worked to elaborate on the toolkit for implementation of the National Agenda, to prioritize the development of specific tools in that toolkit and to identify a national dissemination, implementation and technical assistance approach.
- July 08** ❑ A summary of the goals and purpose of the Courts Catalyzing Change Initiative and the components of the National Agenda for Reducing Racial Disproportionality and Disparities in the Dependency Court System was published in "Courts Catalyzing Change: Achieving Equity and Fairness in Foster Care – Transforming Examination into Action," *Juvenile and Family Justice Today*, Summer, 2008.
- Sep 08** ❑ The National Model Courts All-Sites Meeting held in New Orleans on September 24, 2008, included a strong focus on reducing racial disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system. Judicial officers and child welfare stakeholders from the 37 participating Model Court jurisdictions worked collaboratively to develop strategic plans for implementing components of the Courts Catalyzing Change National Agenda.
- Dec 08** ❑ The Courts Catalyzing Change Steering Committee met in Reno, Nevada on December 16-17, 2008, to begin the development of a Racial Equity Benchcard designed to transform judicial practice from the bench and help reduce disproportionality and disparate treatment of children and families of color.
- Jan 09** ❑ Expert consultants met with NCJFCJ staff in Reno on January 15-16, 2009, to complete the development of the Racial Equity Benchcard, which outlines both internal process of self-reflection that judges should engage in, as well as specific questions to ask dependency court stakeholders from the bench.
- Jan 09** ❑ The Advisory Committee of the Permanency Planning for Children Department (PPCD) of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) met in Reno, Nevada on January 29, 2009. The Advisory Committee was informed about the progress of the Courts Catalyzing Change initiative and related tool development. During the meeting the Committee members were provided with an opportunity to review the draft Racial Equity Benchcard and provide valuable feedback.

May 09 ❑ On May 5, 2009, the Courts Catalyzing Change Steering Committee met in Boston, Massachusetts to discuss the next steps in the implementation of the initiative. The Committee provided input regarding continued tool development, field-testing of the Racial Equity Benchcard, and related training provision. The following day, members of the Steering Committee joined the CCC Call to Action Work Group to review progress and strategies for the implementation of the National Agenda. The Work Group also conducted a final review of the Racial Equity Benchcard and identified strategies for future dissemination of the bench tool.

May 09 ❑ NCJFCJ Model Court Lead Judges also met in Boston on May 7, 2009, where they were informed about the status of the Benchcard development and dissemination plan, as well as the important work accomplished by the Steering Committee and Call to Action Work Group members during the preceding days.

Next Steps ...

- Conduct extensive field-test of Racial Equity Benchcard in selected pilot sites.
- Continue with toolkit development, including vetting those tools through the Courts Catalyzing Change Steering Committee and Call to Action Work Group members.
- Provide in-the-field support and technical assistance to Model Courts in implementing National Agenda strategies.
- Design a process and outcome evaluation of the Courts Catalyzing Change Initiative.

For more information about the Courts Catalyzing Change Initiative, and an update on activities, please contact the NCJFCJ at www.caninfo.org, or Casey Family Programs at www.casey.org