

Judicial Engagement and Judicial Leadership

Hon. Jason Rossell
Kenosha County Circuit Court

Hon. Edward Vlack
St. Croix County Circuit Court

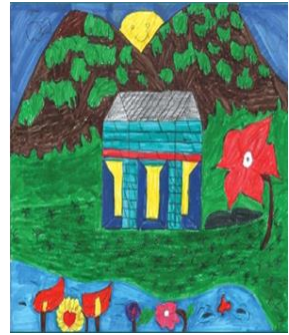
Judicial Engagement and Judicial Leadership

“As a court and as a system ... we cannot do any less than what we expect our families to do. That means that we must periodically review our practices and core beliefs to make changes as needed to be as effective as possible to help our families.”

Hon. Elizabeth G. Crnkovich
Douglas County Nebraska Juvenile Court

Judicial Leadership – The Big Picture

- Families are strengthened with collaborative systems of support
- Children remain safely in their home whenever possible
- Children in out-of-home care achieve timely permanence with enduring connections



*A Home Would be Heaven –
Silvia, Age 13, foster youth
From Foster Youth Art Initiative, Texas
Department of Family and Protective Services*

Judicial Leadership – Strategies for Improving Outcomes

1. See the big picture
2. Focus on the children and families coming before the court
3. Emphasize collegial discussion with community partners
4. Acknowledge judicial discretion
5. Own the data, own the outcomes
6. Share results with stakeholders
7. Use continuous quality improvement cycle

www.ncsc.org/services-and-experts/areas-of-expertise/children-and-families/child-protection-outcomes

Engagement – On & Off the Bench

- Engaging case participants in hearings
- Creating policies and procedures to enhance participation
- Overseeing performance of court related services
- Being aware of services in the community
- Utilizing child welfare and court data to inform practice and policies
- Convening and/or participating in multi-disciplinary groups to improve policies and procedures
- Court-appointed Special Advocates under § 48.07(5)

Exercise Effective Judicial Leadership

- ▶ Think outside the box.
- ▶ Develop a vision of the future.
- ▶ Develop a mission and goals statement.
- ▶ Establish a partnership with other stakeholders.

Consult with Stakeholders – Identify the Stakeholder

- ▶ Court staff
- ▶ Child Welfare Agency
- ▶ School system
- ▶ Local Bar Association
- ▶ District Attorney/Corporation Counsel, GALs, and Public Defender
- ▶ CASA
- ▶ Juvenile Supervision
- ▶ Probation
- ▶ Foster Parents
- ▶ County Administration
- ▶ Law Enforcement
- ▶ Judicial assistant or other scheduling person

7

Consult with Stakeholders

- ▶ Schedule regular meetings.
- ▶ If you have a Criminal Justice Coordinating/Collaborating Council in your county, consider making it a Community Justice Coordinating/Collaborating Council to include oversight of child welfare system/cases.
- ▶ Purpose is to have a dialogue and gain input.
- ▶ Prepare agendas for the meetings.
- ▶ Familiarize yourself with local resources and programs.

8

Consult with Stakeholders

- ▶ Barriers to communication and cooperation
 - ✓ Ego and turf issues
 - ✓ Lack of mutual respect
 - ✓ Absence of standard protocols
 - ✓ Competition for shrinking and/or limited dollars by all parties

9

Judicial Engagement – Examples

- Convene Judicial Engagement Team (JET) or similar multi-disciplinary group
- Establish model court (e.g., Unified Family Court) or treatment court (e.g., Family Drug Treatment Court, Healthy Infant Court)
- Organize “lunch and learns” or other training for judicial officers, attorneys, and/or caseworkers
- Meet with new caseworkers or provide mock court opportunities
- Develop policy for youth attending court
- Create MOU for GALs with minimum standards
- Implement project to expedite permanency (e.g., Tailored Dispositional Orders Project, permanency project to examine resources and delays)

Judicial Engagement – Examples

- What other examples do you have from your county?
- Do you have any additional ideas?

Closing Thoughts

Any closing thoughts from the presenters or participants?