Since 1999, the NCJFCJ has conducted 62 trainings in Iowa for more than 4,500 judges, magistrates, commissioners, attorneys, and other juvenile and family court-related professionals. In addition to its national work, the NCJFCJ supports Iowa’s efforts to improve the juvenile and family courts. The following activities were undertaken by the NCJFCJ over the past 11 years to support and enhance widespread systemic reforms and facilitate the achievement of better outcomes for Iowa’s children and families.

DEMONSTRATION PILOT SITES: The NCJFCJ has a number of national initiatives focused on improving practice, policy, and court-agency-community collaboration in the areas of child protection, juvenile justice, and family violence. Each initiative includes demonstration pilot sites, training, and outreach at the local, state, and national levels. The NCJFCJ provides various forms of training, technical assistance, and research directly to these demonstration sites. Because successful practices, policies and reforms developed locally are shared nationally, these demonstration sites play a critical role in shaping national policy and best practices. Iowa has one demonstration site.

♦ **THE CHILD VICTIMS ACT MODEL COURTS PROJECT** focuses on improving the governmental response to children and families in the child welfare system to ensure safe, timely, and permanent homes for children. Des Moines has been a “Model Court” demonstration site since 2000. Among its many accomplishments and significant systems improvements, the Des Moines Model Court, under the leadership of Judge Connie Cohen, has:
  • Utilized Pre-removal conferences when possible (when not possible, post-removal conferences) to reduce the trauma of disruption to the family. Since the inception of this process, parents often have more contact with their children within five days prior to the removal hearing.
  • Reduced the time between emergency removals and removal hearings from ten days to five days to enhance the frontloading of services.
  • Conducted “Undoing Racism” training through DHS funding to stakeholders and decision makers to support the goal of reducing disproportionality and disparate treatment in the child welfare system and in support of the Courts Catalyzing Change initiative.
  • Continued to utilize the Court Improvement Project’s Assessment to identify areas of need and adopt corrective action plans to further implement the best practices of the RESOURCE GUIDELINES.
  • Continued to adhere to Polk County, Model Court Visitation Philosophy and Visitation Guideline in which the first contact with the child and parents(s)/family will occur within 1-5 working days following out of home placement unless otherwise restricted by the court.
  • Continued to support and promote a dental grant initiative that was formed with area agencies involved with the Model Court. This initiative received funding through Delta Dental of Iowa and utilized the funds to create dental kits that are distributed by the Polk County Juvenile Court Judges and other area agencies. The court is also ensuring dental health for families, and actions are being taken to ensure each child is receiving the appropriate dental care as stated by Iowa law.
  • Held its ninth annual Adoption Saturday Celebration on November 21, 2009; over 1000 people attended.
  • In participation with the Court Improvement Project, is working on extending foster care to age 21 in light of the new Fostering Connections laws.

♦ **THE ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS (AOD) PROJECT** recognizes the impact which alcohol and other drugs have on the youth and families who come before our nation’s justice system. NCJFCJ’s Alcohol and Other Drugs Division has developed cutting edge trainings, publications, and technical assistance opportunities to assist courts in dealing with this issue. The goal of the AOD Division is to work with jurisdictions at a local level to create programs that provide

Includes information through 12/31/10.
opportunities for youthful offenders and their families to reduce substance use, abuse and criminal behavior; strengthen family and community ties; and improve educational opportunities within a framework of strength-based services that promote responsible citizenship and public safety. In Iowa: 2 jurisdictions have participated in juvenile drug court training; 36 participants have attended youth DWI training.

PAST PROJECTS:

♦ **The Community Partnerships for the Protection of Children Project** worked to bring together the public child welfare agency with community-based agencies and local residents to address the issue of child abuse and neglect. Cedar Rapids was a “Community Partnership” demonstration site from 1996 until the project’s end in 2005, receiving technical assistance, training, and resources from NCJFCJ on issues affecting at-risk families.

**Judicial and Interdisciplinary Training Activities:** The NCJFCJ sponsors a variety of training activities tailored to meet the needs of individual jurisdictions or states. These may include site visits or cross-site visits to jurisdictions with innovative programs, training presentations on specific topics or programs for local jurisdictions or states, full-day programs on a variety of topics, or strategic planning sessions for sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th># of Programs Conducted</th>
<th># Participants Trained</th>
<th>Topic Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>Permanency planning; juvenile justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>Collaboration, ASFA, family group conferencing, and dependency mediation; juvenile justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>877</td>
<td>Infant and toddler mental health, termination of parental rights, implementing the RESOURCE GUIDELINES, reasonable efforts, ASFA, substance abuse, and testifying in juvenile court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>Cultural competency, ICPC, and drug affected children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>Confidentiality; child development; custody and visitation; collaboration; immigration issues in juvenile court; transition and re-entry in juvenile justice; ethical issues; community response to child protection; the role of the court in dependency cases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>Permanency planning; Model Court issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>Juvenile law, the role of the juvenile court judge, Model Court training, child welfare issues, infants and toddlers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>Child abuse and neglect issues; Model Court training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Cultural issues in juvenile court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>Disproportionality in child dependency cases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Technical Assistance Activities:** The NCJFCJ provides a wide range of technical assistance to local communities and states to assist in their efforts toward improving juvenile and family courts and related systems. Technical assistance may include provision of topic-specific materials from our extensive library of resources; publications related to innovative programs, best practices, and practical tools; resource contacts for exploration of solutions in other jurisdictions; and in-depth, on-site assistance for strategic planning, needs assessment, or other identified focus areas.

Technical assistance is the process of providing help to resolve a problem and/or create innovative approaches related to juvenile justice, delinquency prevention, child abuse and neglect, and family violence. Products and services include:

- **Publications** – Special educational curricula or topic-specific publications for juvenile and family court-related professionals.
- **Expanded assistance** – Focused technical assistance for a jurisdiction’s targeted areas of need can be arranged to include on-site and cross-site visits. Such visits may include observation of court hearings, interviews or meetings with stakeholders, research, information sharing, and strategic planning.
- **Conference materials** – At a variety of programs and meetings, the NCJFCJ provides additional resource materials to the participants.

Since 1999, the NCJFCJ has fulfilled 1,001 requests for technical assistance from judges, lawyers, and other child welfare professionals in Iowa. Topics of interest include implementation of federal law (e.g., ASFA, ICPC, ICWA), court improvement programs, child abuse and neglect, judicial leadership, family drug courts, foster care, adoption, permanency

Includes information through 12/31/10.
planning, Model Courts, family group conferencing, family violence, custody and visitation in domestic violence cases, juvenile delinquency, family violence and child maltreatment cases, CASA/GAL, and alternative dispute resolution. A wide variety of information is also available via NCJFCJ’s Web site (www.ncjfcj.org), where publications and other materials can be accessed and/or downloaded. During 2010, there were more than 78,000 downloads of materials from NCJFCJ’s Web sites by juvenile and family justice professionals and others from around the country and the world.

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES: The NCJFCJ is committed to evidence-based practice and informed policy development. To this end, the NCJFCJ provides research services through its Reno offices and its National Center for Juvenile Justice in Pittsburgh, Pa. Research and process and outcome evaluation services to courts and related programs to assess best practice and policy implementation, program outcomes, and the consequences of various system reforms for the court, allied agencies, and most importantly, children and families. In addition to providing concrete policy and practice recommendations to the specific jurisdictions and communities, these research and evaluation activities often result in nationally-disseminated publications that present findings on program and policy effectiveness and outcomes. One of NCJJ’s many activities is maintaining the State Juvenile Justice Profiles Web site (http://www.ncjj.org/stateprofiles), which provides detailed descriptions of each state’s juvenile justice system. The site has become a mainstay for federal and state officials, as well as the media, to understand and compare the states on basic legal dimensions, such as provisions for transfer to criminal court and the placement of juvenile court jurisdiction. Recent NCJFCJ and NCJJ activities have included:

- Presented a keynote address to the Iowa Juvenile Court Services Association Training Institute on the topic of research useful to juvenile court officers.
- Presented a keynote address at the Whispers and Screams conference sponsored by the Iowa Gender-specific Services Task Force and Friends of the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women.
- Presented at the Iowa Statewide Disproportionate Minority Contact Conference sponsored by the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice. More than 300 juvenile justice professionals attended.
- Provided training to the Iowa Department of Human Rights at the Annual Workshop for Contributors to the National Juvenile Court Data Archive.

LEADERSHIP AND OUTREACH: Judicial officers and experts from many states have participated in committees and activities to influence changes in policy and practice in their states and nationwide. For example, judicial officers and experts may serve on subcommittees designed to address policy and practice issues in a wide range of topic specific areas, or they may serve on multi-disciplinary drafting committees to create policy statements or develop foundational best practice documents, training materials, and topic focused curricula. Many also serve as faculty. In almost every case, the successes of the local jurisdictions are integrated into these various activities and resultant materials.

A State team led by Justice Marsha Ternus, Iowa Supreme Court, participated in the National Leadership Summit on the Protection of Children, “Justice for Children: Changing Lives by Changing Systems,” held September 20-23, 2005 in Minnesota. The Summit convened teams including chief justices, appellate and trial judges, court administrators, child welfare directors, and state court improvement representatives. These teams came together to develop policy and practice-based state plans for improving practice in child abuse and neglect cases, implementing the best practices of the NCJFCJ’s RESOURCE GUIDELINES: Improving Practice in Child Abuse & Neglect Cases and the recommendations of the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care, and expediting the appellate process for child welfare cases in their jurisdictions.

- Judge Constance Cohen, is Lead Judge of the Des Moines Victims Act Model Court and former member of the NCJFCJ’s Board of Trustees.

MEMBERSHIP: NCJFCJ has 14 members in Iowa, which include Judicial and Associate memberships.

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