Process Evaluation of the King County Parent To Parent Program

KEY FINDINGS

◊ The Parent to Parent Program helps reduce anxiety about the dependency process by helping parents understand they are not alone.

◊ The Parent to Parent Program educates parents on the juvenile dependency system and improves parental perceptions of the juvenile dependency system.

SUMMARY

As of September 30, 2009, 10,894 children in the State of Washington were in foster care.¹ Researchers have identified effective parental engagement as a critical factor to family reunification.² The King County Parent to Parent Program (P2PP) engages parents early in the dependency process through education and peer support from “veteran” parents who have previously navigated the child welfare system. NCJFCJ’s evaluation examined the King County Parent to Parent process, parent perceptions of the program, and the role the Parent to Parent Program can play in reducing judicial workload.

PARENT TO PARENT PROGRAM

There are two key components of the King County Parent to Parent Program:

Veteran Parent Connection. Prior to coming to court for the 72-hour Shelter Care Hearing, a veteran parent or the P2PP coordinator meets with parents to alleviate apprehensions about the dependency process. The veteran parent assures the parents they have an ally in the veteran parent and encourages them to attend Dependency 101.

Dependency 101. Dependency 101 is a two-hour informational session that educates parents about the dependency system, facilitates collaboration between parents and Child Protective Services (CPS), and provides tools and resources to empower parents and engage them in the dependency process. During the session, parents learn about the dependency process, meet child welfare professionals, and hear testimonials from veteran parents who have navigated the child welfare system.

IMPLICATIONS

After attending Dependency 101, parents reported higher levels of trust in CPS and the juvenile dependency system, more awareness of how CPS can help reunify the family, and a better understanding of the roles of child welfare system professionals. These findings were generally consistent across gender and ethnic groups. Some parents also felt that they had more control over the outcome of the dependency process.

The Parent to Parent Program encourages parents to be active in the dependency process and has the potential to improve outcomes for children and families by increasing family reunifications. P2PP may also improve workload by reducing continuances and contested matters.

Parents who completed Dependency 101 felt less alone because of the veteran parents support network.

† This research was conducted in partnership with the King County Juvenile Court and the Washington Administrative Office of the Courts.
