



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF
JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT JUDGES
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Michigan Courts Selected to Participate in NCJFCJ's Implementation Sites Project

National organization to help courts improve outcomes in child abuse and neglect cases

The [National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges](#) (NCJFCJ) has selected the 10th Circuit Court, Family Division in Saginaw, Mich. and the Berrien County Trial Court, Family Division in St. Joseph, Mich. as two of six new courts to join their Implementation Sites Project, which helps to improve outcomes for abused and neglected children and their families.

The NCJFCJ Implementation Sites Project, which is funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, provides child abuse and neglect courts with training, technical assistance and support to guide program improvement, sustainability and performance. As part of their involvement in this project, Implementation Sites are expected to implement meaningful change, evaluate progress as well as share challenges and successes with other courts across the country. The Implementation Sites will integrate promising practices, as defined by the NCJFCJ's [Enhanced Resource Guidelines: Improving Court Practices in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases](#) to guide their system reform efforts.

The 10th Circuit Court, Family Court in Saginaw, Mich. was selected during a time of transition as Lead Judge Barbara Meter was elected two years ago, filling a seat of a judge who served for more than 30 years. The 10th Circuit Court is eager to use this time to begin the system improvement process to better serve the children and families before the court.

“Being new to the bench, I’m excited for the collaboration and guidance that will be provided by the NCJFCJ’s Implementation Sites Project,” said Judge Meter. “The project will not only make me a stronger leader, but will help improve the court’s effectiveness to efficiently respond to the needs of our community’s most vulnerable. We believe we can demonstrate to our children and families that Saginaw County can make great strides in improving how we handle our most delicate and important cases of abuse and neglect.”

The Berrien County Trial Court, Family Division in St. Joseph, Mich. has made great strides on the delinquency side of juvenile cases by implementing new processes to decrease the number of youth taken into the juvenile center, increasing the options

available to divert youth and keep them out of the formal system altogether, and adding an evidence-based continuum of home-based therapy services available for delinquent youth and their families. As a result, the number of formal delinquency filings has been cut in half. The Berrien County Trial Court was selected to pursue the same level of excellence in dependency processes and programs.

“We are both excited and honored to be part of this project,” said Judge Berger. “The NCJFCJ’s Implementation Sites Project offers us the opportunity to do some self-evaluation, as well as evidence-based program development. We are strongly committed to making some positive changes by looking for new and innovative approaches to better serve the citizens of Berrien County.”

A team from the NCJFCJ will travel to both courts next month for initial site visits, which include a variety of assessment activities including court observation, convening focus groups and collecting data for evaluation purposes, which help for a better understanding of the jurisdiction. With this crucial insight and vital input from those involved in the court process, an action plan will be created to assist the court in its court improvement journey.

About the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ):

Founded in 1937, the Reno, Nev.-based National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, is the nation’s oldest judicial membership organization and focused on improving the effectiveness of our nation’s juvenile and family courts. A leader in continuing education opportunities, research, and policy development in the field of juvenile and family justice, the 2,000-member organization is unique in providing practice-based resources to jurisdictions and communities nationwide.

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