



**U.S. Congressional Recess
August 2023**

**NCJFCJ MEMBER MEETINGS AT HOME
WITH YOUR SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVE**

Dear NCJFCJ Members,

Please join your fellow NCJFCJ members in contacting Members of Congress and elected officials during the August congressional recess. Reaching out while Members of Congress are home for their in-district work period helps to educate them about the work of the NCJFCJ and the critical role juvenile and family court judges are playing during these challenging times to improve the outcomes for children, families, and survivors of domestic violence and domestic child sex trafficking. Information-sharing about the work of the NCJFCJ--which includes a focus on helping children and families that appear in your courtrooms heal from trauma--is needed to help federal policymakers understand these issues and support judicial training programs.

As the oldest judicial training organization in the country, the NCJFCJ has provided judicial officers, courts, and court-related agencies nationwide with the education, technical assistance, and research they need to improve the lives of those who seek fair, equal, effective, and timely justice with the support of federal program funds. When contacting your congressional delegation be sure to share specific information as to how you are currently serving families in need and the challenges you are facing to: keep children safe from child abuse and neglect; meet the needs of older youth already in, or transitioning out of, the foster care system; protect the safety of youth being held in juvenile detention centers; strengthen response and intervention systems to meet the challenges of COVID-19; and protect families against violence in the home.

In addition, offer yourself to Members and their staff as they work on issues impacting children, families, and victims. This same outreach is important and encouraged with your Governor and members of your state legislature. The goal is to position the NCJFCJ as a resource to their work as well as to your elected officials. We encourage you to invite your Members of Congress and their staff to observe your court as the experience helps them (many of whom have never been in court) understand the highly complex issues which come before you, further illustrating a case is never as simple as it appears.

The NCJFCJ's federal legislative requests in addition to FY2024 funding requests are stated below and may serve as recommended talking points when you reach out to your Senators and Representative. To access and share the NCJFCJ's state profiles and overview of our subject area

work, visit <https://www.ncjfcj.org/national-impact/>. In addition, [NCJFCJ's Courting Judicial Excellence in Juvenile Justice](#): a 50-state study is a great resource for Congressional staff.

The NCJFCJ appreciates all you do, and we look forward to hearing about your visits and conversations with your Members and elected officials. You can report on your visits to NCJFCJ CEO Joey Orduña Hastings at jhastings@ncjfcj.org.

How to contact your elected officials:

U.S. Senate – visit <https://www.senate.gov/> and select Contact under the Senators menu. You will find your Senators' local office contact information via their webpages. When you call ask to speak with the State Director.

House of Representatives – visit <https://www.house.gov/representatives> to look up your Representative's local office contact information. When you call ask to speak with the District Director.

Congress Please Support the Following!

Department of Justice competitive grant programs; FY 2024 Commerce, Justice, and Science (CJS) Appropriations Requests

--\$6 million for OJJDP Child Abuse Training for Judicial Personnel (President's proposed levels); there is no other existing federally supported grant program available which provides specialized training and needed resources to juvenile and family courts. This discretionary grant program supports training, technical assistance, and research for courts which help to improve outcomes for child abuse and neglect victims, dual status youth, victims of domestic child sex trafficking, and dependency court system reform. (NCJFCJ requested \$6 million, which reflects the President's FY2024 Budget Request)

--\$28 million for OVW Grants to Support Families in the Justice System (President's proposed levels); combines VAWA Court Training and Improvement and Safe Havens: Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange programs and helps judges address the broad range of concerns family violence and child abuse may present while improving the court's response to all aspects of the civil and criminal justice system on behalf of families impacted by these crimes. (NCJFCJ requested \$28 million, which was the President's FY2024 Budget Request)

These grant programs serve as a critical backbone to our nation's response to family violence and child welfare matters. And with the increased funding, NCJFCJ was able to expand judicial education programs. Last year, NCJFCJ increased its trainings and technical assistance for judges and court-related personnel. The NCJFCJ fulfilled over 600 requests for technical assistance (13% increase) and trained approximately 7,000 judges, judicial officers, attorneys, and other juvenile and family court-related professionals (22% increase) across the nation. On-going judicial education is vital given that Congress enacted significant legislation—the

Violence Against Women Act and the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act—last year. Two years ago, NCJFCJ had one Child Abuse and Neglect Institute for 50 judges. But last year, NCJFCJ increased its CANI institutes to two per year for 50 judges each. (Demand for training still exceeds current capacity.)

Proposed funding cuts would impair NCJFCJ's work to do judicial education to ensure we have a well-informed judiciary that protects at-risk children and families and implements laws the way Congress intended.

The debt limit deal--the Fiscal Responsibility Act--established spending caps that are the equivalent of a spending freeze at last year's levels. The Senate is adhering to the terms of the spending deal, but the House Appropriations Committee has proposed deeper cuts to the Commerce-Justice-Science bill that will likely impact key programs at the Department of Justice. We need to use the August recess to make the case for judicial education and to ensure that funding levels are not reduced in any final funding agreement for judicial training programs.

Ask your Senators and Representatives to support funding levels for these DOJ programs.

AUTHORIZATION REQUESTS:

Offer to be a resource

Congress will begin debate the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) sometime in October. (This legislation is typically bipartisan.) Offer to be a resource to Hill offices on these issues given your first-hand knowledge of the cases that come before the bench. You may also want to highlight [NCJFCJ's 50-state study](#), especially the states identified as key models for scaling.

Reauthorization of the Family Violence Prevention Services Act (FVPSA)

FVPSA provides core funding to support programs (including shelter) to over 1.3 million domestic violence victims and their families. Bipartisan reauthorization bills have been introduced in the House. In previous years, this legislation has passed on a bipartisan basis. **Ask your elected official to cosponsor this legislation.**

Reauthorization of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)

This legislation has been bipartisan in previous years and would help states address child abuse and neglect by providing funding for prevention services to support families and to improve child protective services.

A bill to resolve differences and then sent on to the President's desk for his signature. **Make sure your Senator knows you are supportive of the bill passed by the HELP Committee and that floor action is needed quickly.**

Don't forget to thank you Members of Congress for their continued support and efforts on behalf of children, families, and victims of domestic violence and domestic child sex trafficking. For more information regarding the NCJFCJ Legislative Committee and its efforts, please contact Vanessa Stephens, Board and Committee Coordinator, at (775) 507-4786 or vstephens@ncjfcj.org.