

# 2025 Implementation and Tribal Model Court Sites Project

## Call for Applications

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The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) is inviting child abuse and neglect courts to apply and become an Implementation Site. NCJFCJ, with funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), has been partnering with courts across the country since 1992 to improve outcomes for abused and neglected children and their families<sup>1</sup>.

The NCJFCJ Implementation Sites Project provides child abuse and neglect courts with training, technical assistance, and support to identify, prioritize and implement improvement efforts. As part of their involvement in this project, Implementation Sites are expected to implement meaningful changes, evaluate progress, and share challenges and successes with other courts across the country.

Implementation Sites will work to integrate promising practices, as recommended by the NCJFCJ's *Enhanced Resource Guidelines: Improving Court Practices in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases (ERGs)*<sup>2</sup>. The *Enhanced Resource Guidelines* focus on effective dependency court hearing practices to improve the lives of children and families involved in dependency matters. The *Enhanced Resource Guidelines* serve as a blueprint for training on child abuse and neglect practices and are monumental in shaping the way courts handle these cases to best serve the children and families. The *Enhanced Resource Guidelines* covers all stages of the court process, from the preliminary protective hearing until juvenile and family court involvement has ended.

The NCJFCJ provides support to Implementations Sites by assigning a site manager who will work with court team to assess current practices, develop an action plan, and provide training and technical assistance to achieve goals. As part of this effort, judicial leadership and effective collaboration are viewed as essential for project success.

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<sup>1</sup> This project is grant funded and all activities are subject to continued funding awards. Some activities may be conducted virtually. Implementation Sites do not receive direct funding.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ncjfcj.org/publications/enhanced-resource-guidelines/>

## Program Overview

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NCJFCJ is selecting court sites to participate in the Implementation Sites Project. The sites will receive targeted training, technical assistance, and support from NCJFCJ staff over a two-year period to implement the best practices identified in the ERGs which include: One family–One Judge case assignment, time-specific calendaring, children in court, use of alternative dispute resolution methods, substantive high-quality hearings and pre-petition attorney representation. The project is divided into three phases.

### Phase One – Assessment and Planning

During Phase One, the selected Implementation Sites will focus on assessing court practices and developing an action plan to implement practices outlined in the ERGs and recommended in the Initial Site Visit Report. Activities in Phase One include:

- Court self–assessment
- Initial site visit and report
- Introductory *Enhanced Resource Guidelines* training
- Goal setting and action planning
- Monthly meetings with Site Manager

### Phase Two – Implementation

Phase Two will focus on prioritizing and implementing goals identified on the action plan developed in Phase One. Phase Two activities will include:

- Implementing quality hearing practices outlined in the ERG's
- Tailored training and technical assistance
- Site visit(s)
- Monthly meetings with Site Manager
- Lead Judges and All Sites meetings

### Phase Three - Evaluation

- Assess progress on goals
- Re-take court self-assessment
- Sustainability and transition planning

## Program Benefits and Expectations

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The selected Implementation Sites will receive a court self-assessment, training, and technical assistance to implement the principles and recommendations set forth in the *Enhanced Resource Guidelines* and work toward improving practices and outcomes. Implementation Sites will be expected to share their results with the NCJFCJ and other sites to inform and sustain a larger system improvement effort.

The NCJFCJ will provide a Site Manager to work with and guide each Implementation Site. The Site Managers work closely with individual sites to help facilitate systems change efforts through regular

contact and communication to develop, prioritize, and achieve goals and provide thorough, timely, and tailored technical assistance. Site Manager utilize a variety of tools to assess Implementation Sites, including site visits, multidisciplinary trainings, and technical assistance.

### **Site Visits**

Site visits give Site Managers the opportunity to identify strengths, challenges, and technical assistance needs of the Implementation Sites, and to provide a seamless continuum of analysis and feedback to the courts. Prior to a site visit, Site Managers will conduct stakeholder interviews virtually. During site visits, Site Managers will conduct court hearing observations, tour court facilities and conduct action planning.

### **Multidisciplinary Training**

Implementation sites will receive training on the Enhanced Resource Guidelines early in the project. This training may include virtual and or in person methods. In addition, the NCJFCJ may help develop and fund or co-sponsor additional training(s) depending on the site's goals.

### **Technical Assistance**

The Implementation Site Lead Judges and multidisciplinary collaborative team members regularly turn to their Site Managers for information on a wide range of topics related to court and agency reform initiatives, including legal issues, policy issues, programmatic and practice issues, and resource and funding issues.

### **Project Expectations**

- Implementation Sites are expected to participate in the project for two years or until a level of self-sustainability is achieved.
- Sites must select a judicial lead and create a team of stakeholders to participate in monthly meetings with their assigned site manager.
- Implementation Sites are expected to make good faith efforts to implement the *Enhanced Resource Guidelines* and *Key Principles for Permanency Planning for Children*.
- Implementation Sites are expected to implement the quality hearing practices outlined in the *Enhanced Resource Guidelines* which includes specific judicial engagement practices, through discussions on child well-being and making specific verbal findings.
- Implementation Sites require a judicially-led stakeholder collaborative team that consists of system partners (child welfare agency, attorneys, CASA, GAL etc).
- Implementation Sites commit to active participation in assessments, action planning, site visits, and on-site trainings and meetings.
- The Lead Judge and select team members are expected to attend scheduled Lead Judges All-Site Conferences.
- Implementation Sites are expected to share their successes and challenges with other project sites via trainings, webinars, etc.

## Eligibility

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The NCJFCJ is seeking applications from state and tribal courts that preside over child abuse and neglect matters. NCJFCJ will select the new implementation sites based on the following criteria:

- Region or location (a mix of rural, suburban, and urban courts)
- Size of jurisdiction (a mix of small, medium, and large)
- Readiness for change (ability to assess current court practices and infrastructure; the existence of collaborative efforts and/or a willingness to form collaborative structures; and the readiness of the court and stakeholders to participate in the change process)

## Informational Meetings

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The NCJFCJ will host two (2) informational Zoom meetings before the application deadline. During these meetings, NCJFCJ staff will review basic information regarding the Implementation Site Project and speak about the general expectations and benefits of becoming a new implementation site. Participation in these calls is optional and will not impact the application process. The Zoom meetings are scheduled for:

- **Monday November 17, 2025 at 12:00pm EST / 9:00am PST** [REGISTER](#)
- **Monday December 1, 2025 at 3:00pm EST / 12:00pm PST** [REGISTER](#)

## Application Guidelines and Timelines

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Courts applying to become one of the new Implementation Sites should complete the online [APPLICATION](#). Prior to completing the online application, please review the form on page 5 to identify the information needed to complete the application.

Please note that a letter of support from the Presiding Judge of the jurisdiction is required as part of the application. The survey application will have an open text box to allow you to copy/paste this letter into it. The application also has a short answer component, and each court should specifically identify the strengths and the challenges of their jurisdiction. The essay should discuss why the court is interested in participating in the project as well as the strengths of the court team and areas the court could improve in.

### **Application Timelines**

The application opens on **October 27, 2025**.

The application closes on **December 19, 2025**.

Applicants will be notified of the selected Implementation Sites by **January 16, 2026**.

# 2025 Implementation Sites Project Application

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Thank you for your interest in the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges' Implementation Sites Project. Please complete the following application to be considered for the project. The application process will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. It will be helpful to gather some information prior to beginning this application. The selected Implementation Sites will receive individualized assessments, training and technical assistance as they seek to implement the principles and recommendations set forth in NCJFCJ's Enhanced Resource Guidelines.

## **SAMPLE APPLICATION**

**Please submit your application using  
the application link on page 4.**

Court Name and Location

- ☐ Name of Court \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Contact (person filling out application) \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Contact Role \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Contact Email \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Court Street Address \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ City \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ State \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Project Lead Judge Name \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Project Lead Judge Email \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Project Lead Judge Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Is your court a Tribal Court?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Type of Court:

☐

Rural

☐

Urban

☐

Suburban

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Number of judicial officers assigned to dependency, abuse, and neglect cases (including TPR cases):

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If you have access to the following information in your jurisdiction, please indicate the number, otherwise please type "NA." Please use most recent data where available.

☐ Number dependency cases (petitions) filed

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☐ Number of children currently in foster care

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☐ Average length of time children remain in foster care

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☐ Percentage of children who are reunified with their parents

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☐ Number of TPR cases (petitions) filed

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In addition to child abuse and neglect, what other types of cases does the court hear?

☐

Custody

☐

Delinquency

☐

Divorce

☐

General Jurisdiction

☐

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_



Does the court have any Specialty Dockets?

- ☐ Baby Court/Zero to Three
- ☐ Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children/Domestic Child Sex Trafficking
- ☐ Domestic Violence Court
- ☐ Dual Status Youth
- ☐ Family Drug Court
- ☐ ICWA
- ☐ Juvenile Drug Court
- ☐ Mental Health
- ☐ Unified Family Court
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Does the court convene stakeholder or collaborative meetings that address court improvement efforts related to child abuse and neglect cases?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, how often are these collaborative meetings held and which stakeholders typically attend?

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Is the court currently receiving (or has within the last two years) technical assistance related to improving the handling of child abuse and neglect cases?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please indicate the name of the technical assistance provider, their focus and if they are currently active in your court.

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Is the court currently engaged in state Court Improvement Program (CIP) efforts?

☐ Yes

☐ No



Has the lead judge attended any NCJFCJ trainings in the past? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Child Abuse and Neglect Institute (CANI)
- ☐ Domestic Child Sex Trafficking (DCST)
- ☐ Enhanced Resource Guidelines Training
- ☐ Enhancing Judicial Skills
- ☐ NCJFCJ Annual Conference
- ☐ NCJFCJ Juvenile Justice Conference
- ☐ Other (please specify, e.g., Trauma Audit)



Please indicate why the court is interested in becoming an Implementation Site. Please include how NCJFCJ can be of help to your child abuse and neglect court. Please include two (2) goals that are important for the court to establish and work towards. Identify the strengths of your court and program, as well as areas that the court could be improved upon.

Please indicate the courts' readiness to make change. Indicate the courts' ability to assess current practices and describe current collaborative efforts that exist (and with whom) and the willingness of court stakeholders to participate in the project and work towards change. If the court does not currently have a stakeholder collaborative, please describe how you would develop one and who would be included.

To participate in the Implementation Sites Project, NCJFCJ requires a letter of support from the jurisdiction's presiding judge. The open text box below provides space to copy and paste a letter of support.

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