

**MINUTES**  
**Family Court Advisory Commission**  
**NCJC Dogwood Room**  
**December 6, 2019**

The Family Court Advisory Commission (FCAC) met at the NCJC in Raleigh on Friday, December 6, 2019. The meeting came to order at 10:10 AM. The following individuals were present:

*FCAC Members*

Judge Galen Braddy, Chair  
Jeff Barger  
Stephanie Gibbs  
Cheryl Howell  
Judge Beth Keever  
Judge Wayne Michael  
Justin Minshew  
TeAndra Miller  
Nikki Smith  
Rose Stout  
Judge Donna Stroud  
Lori Wainright  
Shirley Webb-Owens  
Judge Amanda Wilson

*NCAOC Staff*

Danielle Carman, Deputy Director  
Christina Harrison, GAL Assistant to the Administrator  
Lori Cole, Court Management Specialist  
Brad Fowler, Chief Business Officer  
DeShield Greene, Court Management Specialist  
Kari Marvin, Court Management Specialist  
Tara Minter, Court Management Specialist

*Guests*

Lindsay Harrison, DHHS  
Anna Stearns, Chief of Staff, NC Supreme Court  
Eric Zogry, Office of the Juvenile Defender

**Raise the Age Update**

Eric Zogry provided an overview of the Raise the Age Legislation, which raised the age of the juvenile jurisdiction from 15 years of age and under to 17 years of age and under for certain offense types. There were two Senate bills related to Raise the Age that became effective December 1, 2019: Senate Bill 257 (2017) and Senate Bill 413 (2019). Eric discussed the legal changes as a result of the legislation, the case types now included in the juvenile courts' jurisdiction, expedited transfers and discretionary transfers of juveniles, housing and transportation, gang enhancements, School Justice Partnerships and the resources that are available.

A question was posed concerning the redaction of juvenile information on an indictment that is submitted to the grand jury. Eric was unsure as to whether the information submitted to the grand jury will have the juvenile's full name, initials or a redacted name. Eric stated that until the juvenile is indicted, the case is not public record. If a case is transferred to superior court due to either a probable cause finding or indictment, the case could still be remanded to

juvenile court upon the motion of both the district attorney and defense attorney. If this occurs, there is a provision for the automatic expungement of the superior court case. Anyone interested in more information about the Raise the Age Legislation may contact the Office of the Juvenile Defender, which provides training across the state to all user groups.

### **Family Court Advisory Commission Charge**

The Family Court Advisory Committee was initially established by Chief Justice Frye as an Ad Hoc Committee 20 years ago; however, there was never a formal order establishing it. Anna Stearns, Chief Justice Beasley's Chief of Staff and General Counsel, advised the group that Chief Justice Beasley has signed a formal order establishing the Family Court Advisory *Commission* for the purpose of monitoring the NC Family Courts and recommending improvements to promote the administration of justice. The Commission's charge was restated in the order, which included making recommendations about expansion, legislation, automation efforts and training curriculums. A copy of the order will be circulated to the Commission members.

Family Courts were created as a pilot program 20 years ago and there is data to show the program works. Anna encouraged the Commission members to think strategically about statewide expansion over the next 5-7 years and to contact her with any questions or concerns. Judge Braddy stated that the goal of the FCAC is to reach every county with family court practices and principles and that it is wonderful to have the commitment of Chief Justice Beasley.

### **Approval of Minutes**

The September 2019 meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

### **Family Court Fact Sheet**

At the September FCAC meeting, the Commission agreed that the development of a fact sheet would be a helpful educational tool when speaking with non-family court chief district court judges about the benefits of family court and what family court entails. Lori Wainright volunteered to work with Commission staff on this project. As a result, two mockups were presented to the Commission. One mockup was more of a reference sheet, which was more comprehensive by listing details about each of the best practices and statistical data related to family courts. The second mockup listed the benefits of family courts to families, taxpayers and employers. Each mockup may be used for a specific purpose or target audience. The more comprehensive mockup may be more helpful when speaking with non-family court judges about the principles of family court. The mockup listing the benefits may be more useful to share with the public about the purpose of family courts, as well as legislators in order to demonstrate the advantages of a family court program.

There was agreement that separate documents are needed for the different audiences. It was suggested that a quote from a legislator about family courts be included in the fact sheet. Anna Stearns informed the FCAC that Andrew Simpson is Chief Counsel for Policy and Governmental

Affairs at AOC. He could speak with legislators about family court and perhaps secure a legislator quote for the fact sheet. Judge Braddy also suggested that including a legislator on the FCAC could help raise awareness about the benefits of family court among the General Assembly. There was discussion about the numerous benefits of family courts to families, attorneys, taxpayers, judges, and clerks. A fact sheet for legislators could list how their constituents benefit from family courts. The Commission agreed that Judge Corpening, District 5 Chief District Court Judge, would be an excellent contributor to a fact sheet listing the benefits of family court.

The FCAC discussed strategies for promoting family courts and how to influence many different people. Christina Harrison suggested a family court “commercial” like the spot that was created for School Justice Partnerships by AOC Communications. Tara Minter suggested contacting the NC Museum of History to see if they would be interested in Lunch and Learns that highlight different Court Programs including family courts. Stephanie Gibbs reminded the FCAC that Wake County will be one of the first counties to implement e-filing and the FCAC should stress the cohesion between e-filing and family courts. Justin Minschew recommended talking with judges in non-family court districts to explain that the district receives extra staff for case management if family court is implemented in their district.

### **E-Courts: ICMS Update**

Brad Fowler provided an update on the integrated case management system (ICMS), also known as Odyssey. Business Process Reviews have been held in each of the 4 pilot counties (Wake, Harnett, Johnston, and Lee) which are essential to configure Odyssey to conform to NC practices and processes. Once the configuration process is complete, Odyssey will be vetted with the users. The first component that will be implemented is Case Manager followed by Attorney Manager. Existing data in the Legacy Systems will be integrated into Odyssey. As the Commission advocates for statewide expansion of family court, he suggested that the language be expanded to advocate for active case management for families.

After a county goes live with Odyssey, scanning of files may begin a few weeks later, which means that paper files will not be obsolete immediately. There were several questions concerning the submission of evidence. The handling of evidence after Odyssey goes live and e-filing is implemented will depend on the rules adopted by the Supreme Court. Judge Stroud is Chair for the Committee that will suggest changes to the Rules of Civil Procedure to conform to e-filing. Judge Stroud said that she welcomes input from the Commission. Concerns about confidentiality and access to sensitive information, such as juvenile cases, will be addressed through the creation of defined user roles and rights.

### **Family Court Annual Report**

Prior to 2016, a Family Court Annual Report was published each year to provide the status of existing family courts and to recommend expansion and the resources needed for expansion. Chief Justice Beasley has asked the Commission to update the Annual Report by March 2020.

The State Judicial Council was created in 2000 to advise the General Assembly and the Chief Justice about the court system but the Council has not met since 2013. Chief Justice Beasley reconvened the Judicial Council and a subcommittee has been formed to look at recovery courts and case management strategies in civil domestic cases. It was suggested that the FCAC strategize with the subcommittee on this front. The FCAC will speak with Emily Mehta, staff to the State Judicial Council, about a collaboration.

### **Permanency Leadership Summit**

Lindsay Harrison is the Permanency Strategy Coordinator for the Child Welfare Division of Social Services at DHHS. On November 20<sup>th</sup>, DHHS-Division of Social Services partnered with the Administrative Office of the Courts to hold a Permanency Leadership Summit titled "Partnership for Permanency: Working Together, Family Forever." The conference was held in Raleigh with funding by Casey Family Programs. There were 200 attendees including DSS attorneys, judges, attorneys, DHHS staff and GAL staff. Topics covered included: trauma informed training, minimizing continuances, strong leadership, ensuring hearing safety, involving fathers and the one judge/one family principle. There are plans to hold another summit next fall.

### **Training Opportunities**

Efforts toward establishing a Mental Health First Aid training class for AOC employees at the NC Judicial Center continue. The goal is to integrate a component into all conferences for Judicial Branch personnel about the stigma associated with mental health issues and ways to overcome this stigma. After the last FCAC meeting, several members asked if the mental health trainings Lori Cole mentioned are for Judicial Branch staff only. Lori clarified that the training is open to both Judicial Branch employees and also FCAC members.

Two court management educational conferences are available in the coming months. The NC Association of Court Management for NC court managers, including family court administrators and case coordinators, will take place December 10-13 in Wrightsville Beach. The National Association of Court Management will hold its mid-year conference February 9-11 in Charlotte. Three FCAs have been selected and funded to attend the national conference.

### **NCAOC Court Programs Updates**

#### ***Access and Visitation***

There was no funding increase for the Access and Visitation grant for federal fiscal year (FFY) 19-20. As a result, the hours for the floating A&V coordinator position were reduced. Since there is no money budgeted for travel, the Access and Visitation Coordinators have been meeting every other month via conference call to discuss programmatic issues.

### ***Custody Mediation***

Kari Marvin provided several Custody Mediation program updates.

- There will be a vacancy in the custody mediation position in District 23 due to the retirement of the custody mediator. Custody Mediation staff will be assisting with the interview process for that vacancy.
- The pilot Domestic Violence Screening Project for custody mediation cases continues in Durham. Since July, 250 cases have been screened. The goal is to incorporate the information that is learned from the project into Odyssey (ICMS) so the screening can be done electronically as opposed to manually.
- The spring training on Internal Family Systems will take place on March 19-20.

### ***Domestic Violence Grant***

Stephanie Satkowiak was unable to attend the meeting. However, Judge Michael informed the FCAC that Domestic Violence E-Filing will be going live in Davie County next week and that he was very pleased with how quickly it was implemented. District 16A (Judge Wilson) is also discussing implementing the grant funded e-filing program. Judge Stroud shared that she is the Chair of the Domestic Violence subcommittee of the Courts Commission that will be discussing programs for both victims and offenders. Lori Wainright added that there is a lack of batterer intervention services in many places throughout the state.

### ***Human Trafficking***

Tara Minter, Coordinator for the Human Trafficking grant, recently provided an overview of human trafficking for custody mediators and is exploring a similar training in the future for the GAL program. She shared that Minnesota has software available to train judges online about child sex trafficking that Tara hopes to adapt for NC judges.

As a board member, Tara recently worked to revamp the website for the NC Coalition Against Human Trafficking ([www.nccaht.org](http://www.nccaht.org)) to include resources and data.

### **Meeting Dates**

The FCAC will next meet on February 28, 2020. The remainder of the 2020 meeting dates are: May 29, September 18 and December 11.

Having no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 12:35pm.

*Submitted by DeShield Greene*