

CONTINUING UPWARD FROM THE SUMMIT

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AN E-NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTING IMPLEMENTATION
ACCOMPLISHMENTS & EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY

STATES OUTLINE "NEXT STEPS" FOR IMPROVING CHILD PROTECTION

JOIN OUR LISTSERV

Members of the Summit state teams or your successors can exchange information through the listserv. To subscribe to the listserv, send an e-mail message to "listserv@listserv.ncsconline.org". In the body of the message, put "join Children-Summit".

Two-thirds of the states attending the *Summit on Children* held in New York City in March 2007 provided NCSC with brief descriptions of the next steps they intend to take to improve their individual child welfare protection services. The steps fall into several categories including:



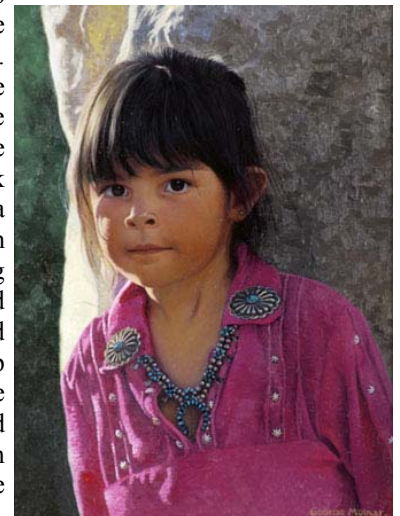
- enlarging the table for collaboration,
- enhancing judicial performance,
- strengthening service delivery,
- establishing or expanding family treatment courts,
- extending the use of ADR services,
- implementing performance measures,
- broadening data sharing, increasing timeliness of trial and appellate proceedings,
- enhancing legal representation,
- increasing youth participation,
- advancing emergency preparedness, and
- responding to new changes to the ICPC.

ENLARGING THE TABLE.

Fifty percent of the jurisdictions reported taking actions to broaden collaboration with additional governmental agencies and entities involved in providing needed services to endangered children and their families. For example, Arizona and North Dakota are reaching out to Native American tribes to better serve Indian families and to ensure the protections guaranteed through the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) are provided to each Indian child. These states, as well as Hawaii and South Carolina are also including education agencies in their collaborative efforts to ensure that the child's educational goals are considered in case management planning in order to reduce drop out rates and disruption in a child's education.



Several states (IL, KS, KY, MD, NY, NC, ND, WA) are enlarging the table of stakeholders by planning summits or other roundtables where all stakeholders are represented and can communicate openly with each other. In North Carolina, teams will be asked to identify five strengths and weaknesses of their district as they relate to processing child protection cases and select five promising strategies and specific activities that could be implemented to improve how those cases are handled. Measures to assess the impact of these activities will also be identified. New York plans to convene a roundtable on permanency planning for juvenile justice and juvenile justice/child welfare overlap population and involve mental health and mental retardation agencies in the roundtable.



REPORTED STATE ACTION PLANS

The following table indicates which state teams have listed post-Summit activities in each of the key categories.

| | Enlarging the Table | Enhance Judicial Performance | Enhance Service Delivery | Family Treatment Courts | ADR | Performance Measures | Data Sharing | Timeliness | Expedited Appeals | Improve Representation | Increase Youth Participation in System | Emergency Preparedness | Respond to ICPC | Miscellaneous |
|----------------|---------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----|----------------------|--------------|------------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Alaska | | | | | | X | | X | | | | | | |
| Arizona | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | | | | |
| California | | | X | | | | X | | | | | X | | |
| Colorado | | X | | | | X | | | | X | | | | |
| Connecticut | | | | | | | | | | | | | X | |
| Georgia | | X | | | | | | X | X | X | | | | |
| Guam | | | X | | | X | | | | | | | | X |
| Hawaii | X | | X | | X | | | | | X | X | | | |
| Idaho | X | | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Illinois | X | X | | | | | X | | | | | | | |
| Indiana | X | | | | | X | X | X | | | | | | |
| Iowa | | | | | | | | | | X | | | X | |
| Kansas | X | | | | X | | X | | | | | | | |
| Kentucky | X | | | X | X | | X | X | | X | | | | |
| Maryland | X | | | | | | | X | | | | X | | |
| Massachusetts | | | X | | | X | X | | | | | | | X |
| Michigan | X | X | | | X | | | X | | | | | | |
| Minnesota | | X | X | | | X | | | | | | | | X |
| New York | X | | X | | | X | | | | | X | | X | X |
| North Carolina | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| North Dakota | X | | | | X | | | | X | | | | | X |
| Pennsylvania | | | X | X | X | | X | | X | | | | | |
| South Carolina | X | | | | X | | | | | X | | | | |
| Vermont | | | X | | | | X | | | X | | | | X |
| Washington | X | | X | | | | | | | | | | | X |
| Wisconsin | | | | | | | X | | | | | X | | |

ENHANCING SERVICE DELIVERY

About 40 percent of the reporting jurisdictions plan to take action to improve the delivery of services to children and families receiving child protection services. Again, the next steps are wide-ranging. Some states intend to focus on the implementation of automated procedures designed to improve the efficient and effective use of dependency court resources while others plan to focus on increasing support services to caregivers. New York will seek to target services by mapping zip codes of children in child welfare system and focus services toward those zip codes. Hawaii intends to make court services more available by eliminating the transportation costs and time required to reach the court. Minnesota plans to investigate the reasons for delays in completing home studies. Based on the results, it will implement measures to ensure the timeliness of home studies. In Vermont, the child protection agency is in the process of developing a new model for service delivery and integration of funding streams to provide better services and support for families. Along with the new model is a plan to better inform legislators and the judiciary on the importance of supporting families and the need for permanency for all youth.



IMPROVING LEGAL REPRESENTATION



Twenty nine percent of the responding states indicated that they intend to take action to improve legal representation in child protection cases. Arizona, Georgia and Hawaii either have or are formulating plans to enhance training for attorneys and GALs. Arizona is completing a second round of training for attorneys in rural areas and continues its efforts to develop statewide standards for attorneys assigned in dependency matters. Georgia is seeking to institutionalize training to ensure that representation is consistently at high quality throughout the state. Hawaii will work with the U of HI Law School to discuss approaches for preparing and encouraging lawyers to engage in family law practice in general, and child protection in particular. Vermont is attempting to identify the difficulties that attorneys face in representing parents and children in child protection. It

will then form a task force to address these difficulties. South Carolina is developing a method to electronically assign counsel to reduce the continuances and increase timeliness of cases.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Approximately 36 percent of the responding states are addressing the increased use of performance measures for child protection cases. Many reported (e.g., AZ, IN, MN, NY) that they would address the issues by enhancing the case management systems to generate and distribute reports to all stakeholders involved to monitor how well the state is meeting its child protection goals.

EXPERT ASSISTANCE SERVICES

The National Center for State Courts (NCSC), with support from The Pew Charitable Trusts, is pleased to announce the availability of statewide child protection expert assistance services.

This expert assistance is intended to help state court systems to (1) strengthen collaboration between courts and state child welfare agencies; (2) enhance strategic planning to improve the child protection process and outcomes; (3) develop and implement performance measures; (4) collect and analyze data regarding the child protection process and outcomes; (5) increase timeliness of child protection proceedings and appeals; (6) develop effective means for better informing judges, court and agency staff, and attorneys regarding the needs of neglected and abused children and the means for addressing those needs; or (7) otherwise address unique issues affecting state efforts to ensure timeliness of permanent dispositions in child protection cases, the fairness of the process, and the safety and well-being of children who require protection. The experts assigned to provide the needed support may be NCSC or NCJFCJ staff, practitioners from other jurisdictions, or independent consultants.

Selection of states to receive assistance will be based on a set of established criteria and subject to approval by the Trusts. To request expert assistance please complete the online application at:

http://www.ncsonline.org/d_consult/ChildProtection/form1.asp

For further information, please contact Mary Beth Kirven at mkirven@ncsc.dni.us or (303) 308-4307.

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