



MINNESOTA JUDICIAL BRANCH

Children's Justice Initiative Judicial Leadership Toolkit

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Children’s Justice Initiative (CJI) Overview

The Minnesota Supreme Court (Supreme Court) is committed to strengthening judicial oversight of child protection cases. To realize this purpose, the Supreme Court is part of a collaborative partnership, the Children’s Justice Initiative, with the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS). These two state entities work closely with the courts and stakeholders in each of Minnesota’s 87 counties to improve the processing and outcomes of child protection cases.

Values

The primary objective of the CJI is to ensure that abused and neglected children involved in the juvenile protection court system have safe, stable, permanent families in a fair and timely manner. This is achieved through observance of values by both staff and county CJI teams.

- Operating “through the eyes of the child”
- Timeliness of hearings, reports to the court, orders, and permanency
- Child safety and stability
- A permanent, nurturing family for each child through reunification, adoption, or permanent transfer of custody to a relative
- Recognition of cultural, social, and economic differences
- Systems accountability
- Due process protection of the parties

Goals

Through continuous quality improvement practices, each county CJI team works to meet the goals of the CJI. Each team regularly reviews its existing child protection system practices using the [CJI County Practice Guide](#) and other state and federal assessment tools. During these reviews, the teams identify areas needing improvement, develop action plans for reforming current practices, implement changes, and revisit their practices to determine if additional action is required to achieve the goals.

- Create and maintain successful and proactive state and county child protection system collaborative teams
- Implement best practices in child protection case processing
- Establish an assessment process aimed at continuous improvement of practices, policies, and procedures

CJI Recommended Best Practices

The following best practices help support the values and goals of the Children’s Justice Initiative:

1. One casework team
2. One judge per case from CHIPS petition through permanency, including adoption
3. One judge per family (covers CHIPS, delinquency, family court cases)
4. One GAL
5. One placement
6. One year to permanency decision by judge

7. Expedited appeals
8. Juvenile protection law on the bar exam
9. Mandatory CLEs for those subject to judicial appointment
10. Court control over docketing of cases
11. Juvenile court referee appointment in larger counties
12. Increased frequency and length of hearings
13. Improved tracking of case progress
14. Recruitment of more foster parents
15. Recruitment of more adoptive families

Performance Measures Expectations: Policies 505.1 and 505.2

Each CJJ team is responsible for reviewing county action plans on a regular basis to ensure continued compliance with key CJJ performance measures, timing objectives, and goals for the Judicial Branch and the Department of Human Services. Please refer to Judicial Council Policies [505.1](#) and [505.2](#) for more information. Each team may consult with the Chief Judge and others resources, as necessary.

Docket Priority Required for CHIPS Cases: [Judicial Council Policy 601](#)

Policy 601 became effective October 21, 2005, and establishes that juvenile protection cases receive docket priority and are expedited in compliance with [state](#) and [federal](#) requirements. The policy also outlines the responsibilities of each judicial district in support of the CJJ objectives. Each district:

1. Must ensure that counties develop and maintain CJJ teams to support and implement the program,
2. Must monitor key outcomes for children in each county in the district,
3. Is encouraged to consider implementing local policies and practices aimed at improving key outcomes, and
4. Is encouraged to support continuing education for all judges and court personnel assigned to juvenile protection matters.

Forming a Successful County CJJ Team

There are a number of actions and steps judicial districts can take to develop and maintain successful county CJJ teams. A key step is for each chief judge to be aware of the status of each county's CJJ team and ensure that all of the roles are sufficiently filled by individuals who are committed to ensuring the success of the team.

Organizational Structure

In addition to the statewide leadership roles of the CJJ, each county CJJ team should be comprised of members from a number of different stakeholder agencies. Specific roles are defined and recommended, including judges and court administration staff. See [CJJ Organization Roles & Responsibilities](#) for detailed information applicable to each CJJ organizational position.

When selecting team members, consider the following:

- Select decision makers with the authority to implement change, as well as line staff who are involved in daily case processing of CHIPS cases.
- Invite representatives from all key stakeholder groups.
- Personally ask people to become members of your county team.
- Solicit commitment to attend meetings and to fully participate in improving the child protection court process.
- Replace members who no longer demonstrate commitment to the team.

One of the critical roles for a county CJI team is the “team secretary.” This person is responsible for the tasks that keep other team members engaged and informed on the actions and progress of the team. It is important to select a person for this role who can effectively communicate through the preparation of agendas, distribution of meeting reminders, minutes and summaries, and follow through on assignments.

Meeting Logistics

Each meeting of the CJI team is important and will be most successful with advanced planning and organization. The first meeting, or a team renewal meeting if the team has been inactive for a while, is important for establishing a common vision for the team.

In these early meetings, the team will establish a common vision and set the tone for future meetings. There are a few things the CJI judge can do to accomplish this and create a positive team environment.

- Schedule recurring meetings to ensure time is reserved on members’ calendars.
- Consider scheduling meetings at easily accessible locations.
- Allot plenty of time for productive discussion.
- Allow team members to question the status quo.
- Prepare and provide meaningful agendas in advance of meetings.
- Support team building through the use of name plates, diverse seating arrangements (i.e., ask people to sit by others not from their agency or discipline), and by allowing time for networking breaks.
- Arrange refreshments if desired.

Toolkit

The following information is offered to support the practices of county CJI teams from initial implementation through ongoing operations.

How to Develop a County CJI Team

Each county CJI judge must establish a county CJI team composed of representatives from child protection system stakeholder groups.

CJI Judges Serving Multiple Counties

The CJI judge is the leader for county CJI teams. Some judges will serve as the CJI judge in multiple counties. When this is the case, consult with Social Service Agency Directors on:

- Involvement of the Director(s), including partnering in leadership responsibilities.
- Possibly combining county teams.

Step 1: Invite Key stakeholders

- Juvenile court judges
- Court administration staff
- County attorney
- Social services
- Guardian ad Litem
- Attorney for parents
- Attorney for children
- Tribal representative
-

Step 2: Invite Other Stakeholders

- A parent
- County commissioners
- Housing specialists
- Local legislators
- Probation and community corrections
- Public health officials
- Truancy officers
- A youth who experienced foster care
- Domestic abuse advocate or counselor
- Insurance providers
- Medical professions
- Psychologists
- School officials
- Others in the community who work in child protection
- Chemical health professionals
- Foster Parents
- Law enforcement
- Mental health professional
- Public defender dispositional advisors
- Tribal representatives
-

Step 3: Identify the Team Secretary

Step 4: Contact and Schedule a Meeting with County Social Services Director(s) to discuss roles and responsibilities and agenda items.

Step 5: Schedule First Team Meeting & Personally Invite Team Members

Step 6: Draft Agenda and Send Meeting Invitations

County CJI Team Exercise Sample

Group Exercise Instructions: Designate someone to take notes and to report back to the large group.

1. Take 10 minutes to identify one area of the county's child protection court process that needs improvement (this should be an area that does not require additional financial or other resources to achieve the improvement).
2. Take 15 minutes to identify alternative ways for the county team to achieve improvement in the area identified in number 1.

CJI Team Discussion Topics and Potential Presenters

Topic	Potential Presenters
Reasonable Efforts: What are the required “reasonable efforts” findings and what are their timing requirements?	Debora Beske Brown , MN. Dept. of Human Services, Child Foster Care Supervisor, 651-431-4731
Licensing: What are the requirements, practices, and procedures for licensing relatives and non-relatives for emergency placement, foster care, and adoption?	Debora Beske Brown , MN. Dept. of Human Services, Child Foster Care Supervisor, 651-431-4731 Mary Larson , MN Dept. of Human Services, 651-431-6551 Mical Peterson , MN Dept. of Human Services, Children’s Services Supervisor, 651-431-4728
Permanency Timeline	Judy Nord , Staff Attorney, State Court Administration, 651-282-3972
Title IV-E Requirements	Judy Nord , Staff Attorney, State Court Administration, 651-282-3972
Interstate Compact on Placement of Children (ICPC)	Mical Peterson , MN Dept. of Human Services, Children’s Services Supervisor, 651-431-4728 Tamera VanMoer , MN Dept. of Human Services, Consultant, 651-431-4727
Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)	Jessica Ryan , Tribal Attorney, Ryan Skeesuck Law Office, 952-893-1813 Shannon Smith, Director , Indian Child Welfare Act Law Center, 612-879-9165
Working with Undocumented Youth - Special Juvenile Immigrant Status (SJIS)	John Keller, Executive Director , Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota, 651-641-1011 Rebecca Scholtz , Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid, Immigration Law Project, 612-746-3715 Susan Schmidt, MSW, LGSW , Adjunct Social Work Instructor, St. Catherine University, 651-488-2637
Relative Searches	Debora Beske Brown , MN. Dept. of Human Services, Child Foster Care Supervisor, 651-431-4731
Working with Undocumented Parents and Parents Residing in Other Countries	John Keller , Executive Director, Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota, 651-641-1011
Case Plans	Debora Beske Brown , MN. Dept. of Human Services, Child Foster Care Supervisor, 651-431-4731
Maltreatment Determinations	John Geffen , Attorney, Arneson & Geffen, 612-465-8580

Topic	Potential Presenters
Trauma-Informed Practice	Elizabeth Carlson , PhD, Institute of Child Development, University of Minnesota, 612-866-9855 Kelly Knutson , Supervisor of Quality Assurance, MN Dept. of Human Services, 651-431-4665
Public Benefits Available to Assist Families	Anne Quincy , Supervisor Attorney, Mid-Minnesota Legal Assistance, 612-746-3745
Parenting Capacity Assessment	Deena McMahon , McMahon Counseling & Consultation, 952-405-7645
Children and Youth in Court	Nick Vogel , MN Dept. of Human Services, Extended Foster Care, 651-431-4701 Lillia Panteleeva , Director, Children’s Law Center, 651-644-4438
Prenatal Exposure and Maternal Substance Use	Susan Krinkie , MN Dept. of Human Services, Social Services Consultant, 651-431-4697
Sexually Exploited Youth	Lauren Ryan , Director, Safe Harbor/No Wrong Door, MN Dept. of Health, 651-201-5412

Minnesota’s Children’s Justice Initiative County Practice Guide

The [CJI County Practice Guide](#) is based on the Resource Guidelines published by the NCJFCJ¹ and is used by Minnesota CJI teams to compare the county’s current practices related to CHIPS, TPR, and Permanency case processing with the national standards. CJI teams should identify areas of improvement and develop an action plan.

The companion document, [Core Strategies for Achieving Timely Permanency](#) describes the statutory requirements and recommended strategies and best practices for achieving timely permanency for children. It may not be possible to implement every practice described in this guide; however, selected practices are used to measure compliance with Minnesota’s CJI goals.

CJI Organization Roles and Responsibilities

Minnesota Judicial Branch Lead

The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court

- Co-chair of Advisory Committee
- Liaison with the Minnesota Department of Human Services
- Communication lead for juvenile courts and other stakeholders

¹ NCJFCJ is the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

Minnesota Department of Human Services Lead

The Commissioner of the Department of Human Services

- Co-chair of Advisory Committee
- Liaison with the Minnesota Supreme Court
- Communications lead for county social services agencies and other stakeholders

Statewide Lead CJI Judges

Appointed by District Chief Judge

- Primary advisors to the Minnesota Supreme Court Lead and state CJI staff regarding the [Permanency Technical Assistance Project](#)
- Consultants for county CJI judges and teams statewide
- Primary liaisons with stakeholder leaders; e.g., Board of Public Defense, Department of Human Services, Minnesota County Attorney's Association, Guardian Ad Litem Board
- Communication lead at stakeholder group meetings, including Judicial Council, district bench meetings, and professional associations

District Chief Judge

Responsibilities are specified in [Judicial Council Policy 601](#)

- Appoints a County CJI Judge for each county
- Appoints District CJI Staff
- Includes CJI and child protection updates as standing agendas item for bench meetings
- Ensures counties develop and maintain CJI teams
- Monitors and works to improve child protection data and outcomes for children pursuant to Judicial Council Policies [505.1](#) and [505.2](#)
- Encourages policies and practices supportive of improving key outcomes in juvenile protection matters
- Encourages continuing education for all judges and court personnel assigned to juvenile protection matters

County CJI Judge

[One or more per county](#) appointed by District Chief Judge

- Establishes, chairs, and regularly convenes the county CJI team

- Collaborates with the county social services director to plan meeting agendas, direct work assignments, identify priorities, oversee practice revisions, and review performance measures
- Promotes positive change among the stakeholders
- Reviews and communicates results of county data and other reports to the team and Judicial Council
- Participates in state and district CJI initiatives and planning efforts

County CJI Team Support Person (“Team Secretary”)

Designated by each County CJI Judge

- Assists the County CJI Judge in arranging meetings, preparing agendas, and sending meeting notices
- Keeps and distributed accurate CJI team meeting summaries
- Provides status reports on team activities as requested by state CJI staff or district staff
- Reviews and analyzes DHS and Supreme Court data
- Forwards notices from state CJI staff to team members and other child protection system stakeholders in the county

CJI Statewide Advisory Committee

Appointed by Chief Justice and DHS Commissioner

- Advises the Supreme Court, DHS, and other stakeholders statewide regarding the strategies and general direction of the CJI
- Assists with identification of performance measures expectations
- Regularly reviews district and county status reports for compliance with performance measure expectations
- Identifies stakeholder training needs and opportunities
- Members serve as liaisons to and share CJI communications with stakeholder groups

District Lead Judge

One or more per district, appointed by District Chief Judge

- Attends periodic statewide lead judge meetings
- Participates in statewide project planning and policy development
- Promotes implementation of [Judicial Council Policy 601](#) in all counties in the district at district bench meetings, through email communications to district employees, and by providing technical assistance to County CJI Judges and teams

- Regularly reviews county action plans and data reports for compliance with performance measures expectations
- Consults with the Minnesota Supreme Court Lead and others as necessary

District Project Staff

One or more per district, appointed by District Chief Judge

- Assists District Lead Judge and County CJI Judges with scheduling and leading district CJI planning meetings
- Helps prepare materials for District Lead Judges to present at bench meetings
- Regularly reviews and summarizes district and county performance measure reports
- Examines performance measure reports with District Lead Judges.
- Communicates regularly with District Lead Judges about fulfillment of best practices provided in the [CJI County Practice Guide](#) and [Core Strategies for Achieving Timely Permanency](#).
- Collects and reviews team status reports and discusses with District Lead Judges
- Serves as point of contact for all district teams and state CJI staff

State Court Administration CJI Staff

- Informs Supreme Court Lead, DHS Lead, Statewide Lead CJI Judges, District Lead Judges, County CJI Judges, and County CJI teams about the direction and general parameters of the CJI
- Provides general expertise and technical support to CJI teams and individuals in terms of legal research, review of local practices and procedures, local CJI team development, etc.
- Leads work on development of statewide publications, reports, and forms
- Serves as general resource to stakeholders
- Obtains and coordinates expenditures of federal funding related to the CJI
- Monitors and evaluates status and improvements to support federal reporting requirements and general project planning and direction
- Receives and reviews status reports from the Districts and responds as needed

Templates

The last few pages of this document include templates of agendas and a CJI team roster that can be used to support the organization of district and county CJI work. A link is provided to a Microsoft Word version of each template that can be downloaded and edited as needed.

County CJI Team Roster
[Editable County CJI Team Roster](#)

Category	Name	Agency	Phone & Email
County CJI Judge			
Other Child Protection Judge(s)			
Court Administrator			
Deputy Court Administrator			
County Attorney			
Assistant County Attorney			
Court Administrator			
Deputy Court Administrator			
Social Services Director			
Social Worker or Supervisor			
District GAL Manager or Coordinator			
Guardian Ad Litem			
Attorney for Parents			
Attorney for Children			
Foster Care Provider			
School Official(s)			
Tribal Representative			
Other			

County CJJ Team Meeting Agenda: First Meeting

[Editable County CJJ Team Meeting Agenda: First Meeting](#)

[INSERT COUNTY] CJJ Team		
Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions to each other and their roles in the child protection process. • Gain a common understanding of the Children's Justice Initiative and the child protection court process. • Begin the process of working together as a decision-making team. 	
Team Members:		
Date:	Time: [2.5 hours suggested]	Location:
Time	Topic	Presenter
10 minutes	Welcome	CJJ Judge
15 minutes	Introductions	All
15 minutes	Overview of CJJ	Guest Speaker (see below)
25 minutes	Networking Opportunity	All
25 minutes	Watch Video: In the Best Interests of Your Child & Review Forms	CJJ Judge
15 minutes	Discuss Video in Small Groups: How to Ensure Parents See the Video?	All
15 minutes	Share Small Group Discussions on Video	CJJ Judge
10 minutes	Other Members to Consider Adding?	All
5 minutes	Q&A	CJJ Judge
10 minutes	Closing Comments & Adjourn	CJJ Judge

Guest Speaker: Consider inviting a District Lead Judge, State Staff, or other motivational leader to present. Presentation ideas:

- General CJJ concepts
- Successes achieved by existing CJJ counties
- Review of CHIPS filings the county (previous year)
- How can the team make improvements?

Agenda Template: Later Team Meetings

[Editable Agenda Template: Later Team Meetings](#)

[INSERT COUNTY] CJI Team		
Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introductions to each other and their roles in the child protection process, if needed. Continue to build and work together as a decision-making team. Continuous improvement discussions to ensure success and sustainability. 	
Team Members:		
Date:	Time: [2.5 hours suggested]	Location:
Time	Topic	Presenter
	Welcome	CJI Judge
	Introductions	All
	Networking Opportunity	All
	Review Team Action Plans	CJI Judge
	Review Resource Needs	
	Review Progress on Team Goals	
	Discuss Outcome Measures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review District & County Data (MNJAD reports) Discuss Use of Outcome Measures Set Goals to Meet State Targets 	
	Discuss Future Goals & Expectations	
	Closing Comments & Adjourn	CJI Judge