



District Team Report - April 2009

1. Tell us about your district team activities – how are you organized, how frequently have you met, any new members, any work groups, etc.?

- Our team divided in work groups based on geographic location. Initially, meetings were occurring fairly frequently, but that has subsided with time.
- The teams were able to get many new people in their communities and systems involved.
- The summit team for 2009 has eight new members than the team in 2007, with others from 2007 remaining involved in projects throughout the district.

2. What have you accomplished from your work plan from Summit 2007?

- Excerpt from the Chief Judge's summary from summit 2007 – “Our summit team began with the collective idea that our efforts would promote successful results for children and their families and provide safety and permanency for children involved in dependency cases. Our team had a shared vision and was aware of the need to share appropriate information among the various organizations involved in the juvenile court process. We also believed that the ideas we adopted could be tailored to our district needs, could provide shared leadership and information, and could be a catalyst for implementing systemic changes for the benefit of children. Agencies other than those represented by members of the team were identified whose functions would add to the ability of the district to achieve the goals of our team. Our team identified the most significant problem as a failure to share information or communicate in a meaningful way among the various participants in the juvenile process. We concluded improving and developing methods of communication would be an important way of continuing collaborative efforts and improve outcomes for dependent and neglected children. “
- Goals that were set were to first, Be a Team! Other goals were: to facilitate Guardian Ad Litem training; host listening sessions with the judges hosting them in each area; establishing work groups, including a professional development group, and another one to work on barriers to processes; and figure out a way to disseminate information, whether that is a web site/list serve.
- To meet those goals, there were numerous projects or activities that occurred:
 - There has been on-going collaboration between the courts, attorneys, DHS, substance abuse providers, education providers, mental health providers, Child Health Specialty Clinics, pediatricians, CASA, among many other stakeholders in the communities of the district.
 - “Over this past spring and summer, we developed a curriculum and made presentations to the school districts in Centerville and Albia. These presentations were to educate teachers and staff about the juvenile court process and to facilitate communication between DHS, providers and the schools. We also developed report forms and a data sheet so that the

schools would know the contacts if there are concerns and also so the teachers can report about changes or concerns about specific children that are involved with juvenile court. I will be scheduling a meeting in the near future to assess how the system is working and follow up on any areas that need adjustment. We will also need to assess what area we should next direct our efforts.” -GAL

- “I am going to meet with a local DHS worker to go over everything, and see what we can accomplish as a practical matter with our new restraints as the result of the budget crunch.” -District Associate Judge
- “A few of us from the Gr8 Expectations team have been working on getting a volunteer coordinator to provide transportation services to parents in CINA cases. DHS supervisors in our area were instrumental in getting me connected with the director of the Retired Senior Volunteer Program in Ottumwa. She has now hired a woman to coordinate volunteers to transport parents in both Washington and Jefferson counties. She will have some office space in both Washington and Fairfield. It's my understanding that there are two state cars that can be used for transport in Washington when available. I hope to meet with her soon to discuss her progress in this position. Transportation services are the request I get from parents most often in juvenile court, so this coordinator can help fill a real need.” -District Associate Judge
- “The last meeting was some time ago with a general premise that the department, schools, and service providers would attempt to work together more effectively. If I recall correctly, the discussion involved a considerable amount of one entity not fully understanding another entities responsibilities, assets, and limitations. Some of that was cleared up.” –District Associate Judge
- CASA coordinator held a roundtable with CASA and Foster Care Review Board. Their focus was, “How do WE help?”. CASA volunteers are now being trained to contact the GAL's more and invite them to a visit when they are going.
- A 3-4 hour training was held with the first hour being devoted to ethics in child welfare, the second hour was on CASA and Foster Care Review Board (primarily CASA) talking about how CASA works, the training they do, etc. and then the last hour was divided between a discussion on children in court and sibling visitation. An Associate District Court Judge and the CASA Coordinator facilitated the training.
- Training was held for local attorneys in Ottumwa, in Fall, 2007. There was also one in Washington, around that same time. The training involved a discussion of DHS changes using the new "service array" when they changed how services are provided to families. DHS supervisors facilitated this training.

3. Tell us how you used your mini-grant funding.

- District Wide Trainings
 - Training held with DHS – DHS presented as well as a GAL – September 2007 (75 people in attendance, including a keynote by Chief Justice Marsha Ternus)
 - Training held – Dr. Nicholas Taylor – September 2008 (95 people in attendance, including Honorable Brent Appel as a speaker)

4. Did you develop any materials, or changes that we can share?

- None

5. What successes have you had?

- Mini- summits
- Trainings
- Collaboration!
- Family Treatment court/steering committee

6. What barriers got in your way of achieving your goals?

- DRIFT – people were energized in the beginning and then some drifted away as time went by
- Budget constraints
- Lack of buy-in by some District Judges to see that juvenile cases take priority

7. What have you done to move closer to achieving the Supreme Court Goals for the district team?

- Collaboration with other agencies to bring about lasting change in our system has been demonstrated in numerous ways
 - Mini-summits
 - Steering committee for FTC
 - Continued trainings
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- Adopting measures to ensure parents have an opportunity to participate in their proceedings in a meaningful way
 - Lawyer training in conjunction with CASA on ethics, sibling visitation and children in court
- The court should act as champions for children in the court system to see that the PEW recommendations are implemented

8. Please send a list of your current membership.

- Chief Judge James Blomgren
- Judge Mark Kruse
- Deb Dice
- Heidi Baker
- Pat McAvan
- Denise Gonzalez
- Laura Krehbiel
- Mike Rempe
- Linda Beck
- Nicole Breckenridge
- Sharon Roling
- Kim Kelly
- Mary Lipp
- Lisha McCoy
- Aprile Goodman
- Cindy Miller