

**NEVADA'S COURT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
FOR THE PROTECTION AND PERMANENCY OF DEPENDENT
CHILDREN (CIP)
COORDINATOR'S ANNUAL DATA ASSESSMENT REPORT
DECEMBER 2009**



*Nevada Supreme Court
Administrative Office of the Courts*

**STATE OF NEVADA
COURT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CIP)
COORDINATOR’S ANNUAL DATA ASSESSMENT REPORT – DECEMBER 2009**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The past year has been one of the best years yet for the Court Improvement Program. Building on its foundation and continuing the work of such a progressive and proactive program has been a true honor. I have also appreciated the opportunity to work with the leadership of Supreme Court Chief Justice James Hardesty, Associate Justice Nancy M. Saitta, and Associate Justice Michael Douglas. Without their wisdom, clear direction, passion, and patience, the Nevada Court Improvement Program would not be where it is today. Such strong leadership and advocacy protects the rights of all of our children and families, and assures CIP will continue to make progress toward improving outcomes for children and families.

CHAPTER 1

COURT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CIP) SELECT COMMITTEE

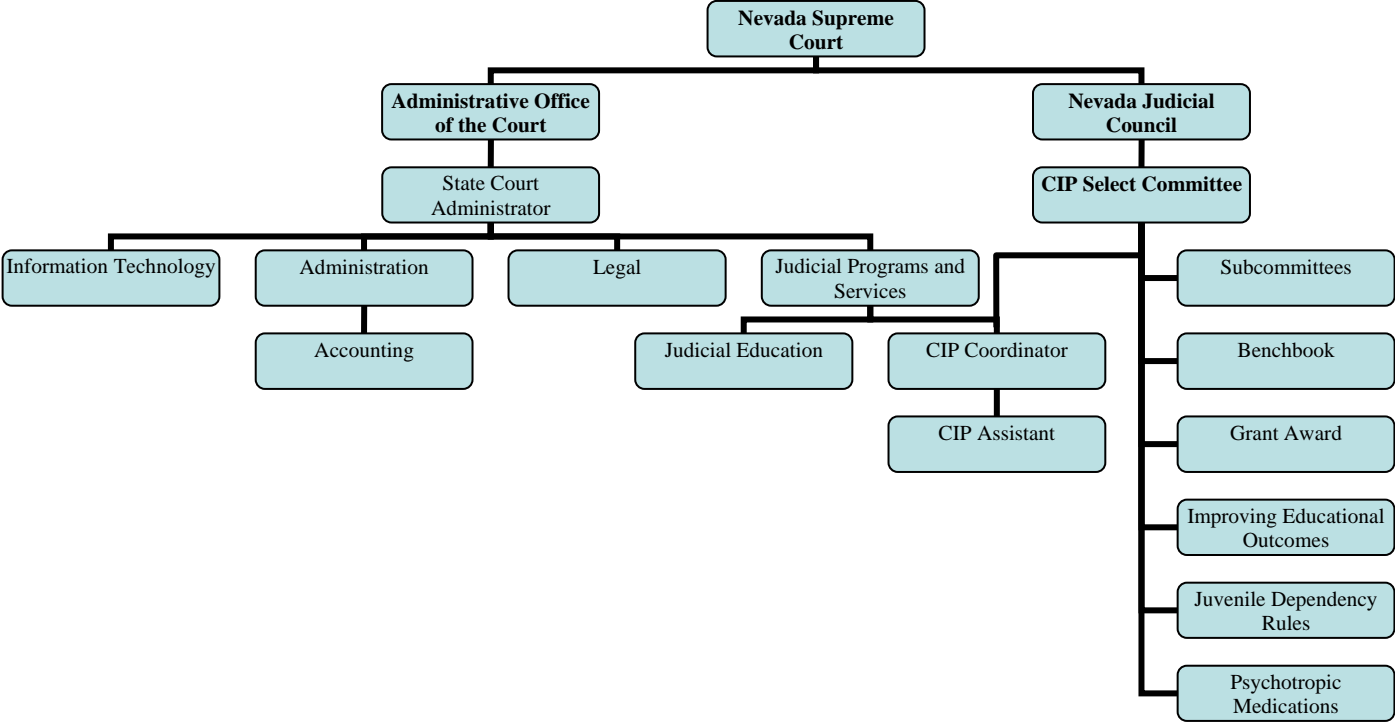
The Court Improvement Program is a multidisciplinary program that seeks improvement of interrelated systems serving children and families who enter the child welfare system. The program operates through team-oriented court and agency initiatives. The goal of CIP is to make the system more efficient and reduce the amount of time child victims of abuse and neglect spend in the foster care system.

As a standing committee of the Judicial Council of the State of Nevada, the Committee serves in an advisory capacity. Each year the CIP program begins with the CIP Annual Meeting/Retreat where the CIP Select Committee reviews progress on the strategic plans and priorities for the current year. Agendas for the subsequent quarterly meetings are structured around specific action items and are developed by Select Committee members in coordination with the CIP coordinator. The CIP Select Committee Chair serves on CIP-related subcommittees, helps direct and oversees policy development, and reviews and approves new project proposals for funding. A CIP Select Committee Roster is attached as **Appendix A**.

The CIP Select Committee is directly supported by two individuals employed by the Nevada Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), specifically, the CIP Coordinator and a full time CIP Assistant. Additionally, CIP is supported by other departments within the AOC on an as-needed basis. The following organizational chart depicts the structure of CIP as well as the Supreme Court and departments within the AOC which support CIP.

Finally, the work of CIP could not be accomplished without the dedicated teamwork and assistance of Nevada's federal, state, and local collaborative partners, which are listed in the attached **Appendix B**.

COURT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CIP) ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



CHAPTER 2

STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVES AND STATUS

The table starting on the next page lists the activities found in the Data Collection, Analysis, and Sharing (or “Data”) Strategic Plan as well as providing a list of initiatives associated with each activity and the status of each of these initiatives.

**STATE OF NEVADA
COURT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CIP)
COORDINATOR'S ANNUAL DATA ASSESSMENT REPORT – DECEMBER 2009**

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Data Collection, Analysis, and Sharing (DC) or “Data” Strategy DC1
**Keep current on national trends and requirements pertaining to data collection, analysis, and planning
pertaining to child welfare cases**

Strategic Plan Activity Code	Current CIP Initiatives	Status
<p>Linked to AP 2.1 and ED 4.1</p> <p><i>(continued on next page)</i></p>	<p>Measuring outcomes for the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada (LACSN) Children’s Attorneys Project (CAP) Pro Bono Lawyers Project and</p> <p>Educational Surrogate Advocacy Project</p> <p><i>(continued on next page)</i></p>	<p>The CAP Pro Bono Lawyers Project is measured by (1) the number of volunteer attorneys recruited and trained and (2) successful advocacy for services (e.g., mental health treatment; interim placement that is safe and meets the needs of the child; and timely and individualized progress towards permanency). LACSN tracks the number of hours spent by each volunteer attorney, actions taken by the attorney, and results for each of the CAP cases assigned. As a result of the 29 new volunteers recruited to the project, 109 new children or sibling groups have attorneys. Approximately 25 attorneys attended the 3-hour CLE training programs LACSN offered on “Representing Child Victims of Abuse and Neglect” in both May and October 2009, in Las Vegas. In the prior year, LACSN offered only 1 training and had 13 attendees.</p> <p>The Educational Surrogate Advocacy Project’s success is relative based on the outcome achieved for each individual client. For some, admittance to college may be the ultimate goal and only through reaching that goal could their case be considered “successful.” For others, merely maintaining good attendance in school may be a success, and for others, gaining the skills to sit at a single desk for an entire class period is a success. The program works toward reaching the highest, most functional point possible for each child. Progress in each case is followed closely through contact with each surrogate by the project coordinator through telephone calls, personal meetings, and email.</p>

Strategic Plan Activity Code	Current CIP Initiatives	Status
<p>Linked to AP 2.1 and ED 4.1 (continued)</p> <p>(continued on next page)</p>	<p>Educational Surrogate Advocacy Project</p> <p>CAP Adoption Subsidy Project</p> <p>Nevada CASA Association, Inc. (NCA)</p> <p>Great Basin CASA Project (continued on next page)</p>	<p>Information from the volunteer is entered into each child and surrogate's individual files, as well as documented in LACSN's online database. Ninety (90) children were represented by surrogates during the year.</p> <p>The goal of the Adoption Subsidy Project is to help adoptive parents navigate the adoption subsidy process, potentially helping to reduce the backlog of children in the foster care system awaiting adoption. LACSN has developed written information to assist prospective adoptive parents in understanding adoption laws and regulations, the federal and state requirements for adoption subsidy, and their rights and responsibilities as prospective adoptive parents. An information brochure, <i>Navigating Nevada's Adoption Subsidy Program- A Guide for Clark County Families</i>, was developed and is available at no cost for the public. This brochure is available on the LACSN website (www.lacsn.org).</p> <p>The Nevada CASA Association (NCA) Project has been provided with second year funding to support the Nevada CASA Association, Inc. The purpose of the Nevada CASA Association is to support existing local CASA programs with volunteer recruitment, training, and support as needed; expand the program to at least one additional county annually in a Judicial District; to provide a CASA volunteer for every abused and neglected child; and to promote the CASA mission throughout Nevada. With more CASA programs and more volunteers, more abused and neglected children have advocates working toward the ultimate goal of permanency. Local CASA programs are now serving abused and neglected children in eight counties. NCA has published its first brochure, which is used for publicizing the CASA mission and recruiting activities throughout Nevada. NCA has formed an advisory committee comprised of CASA volunteers to (1) promote awareness of the CASA mission in Nevada; (2) seek grant opportunities for NCA; and (3) help solicit donations for NCA.</p> <p>The Great Basin CASA Project was provided partial funding by CIP to cover the start-up of a new CASA program for the White Pine and Eureka Counties in the Seventh Judicial District. The first case appointed to Great Basin CASA</p>

Strategic Plan Activity Code	Current CIP Initiatives	Status
<p>Linked to AP 2.1 and ED 4.1 <i>(continued)</i></p> <p><i>(continued on next page)</i></p>	<p>Great Basin CASA Project</p> <p>Early Representation Project</p>	<p>was in August 2008, and since then, CASA has advocated for 17 children. Great Basin CASA, which is based in White Pine County, was assigned its first two cases in Eureka County in late spring 2009.</p> <p>The Early Representation Project begun in February 2009 follows best practice research regarding improving outcomes for children by reducing to a minimum the time a child spends in placement, and expediting comprehensive case planning while applying efforts to reach an early resolution of plan and permanency for the child. The core of the program is immediate appointment of counsel for children and parents, exchange of reports and necessary information, and a facilitated series of meetings with all counsel and stakeholders, within days of removal to identify and resolve conflicts and reach a collaborative solution. All cases were assigned to a single judicial officer and originate from a single geographic service area. Stakeholders include the Clark County Department of Family Services, the offices of the District Attorney juvenile division, Special Public Defender, conflict counsel, and the Children's Attorneys Project of Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada.</p> <p>The goal of assigning attorneys to all parents and all children at the initial protective custody hearing was met, thus assuring counsels' participation in hearings, safety team meetings, and any subsequent child and family team (CFT) meetings. In every case, the court assigned the Special Public Defender, the private conflict counsel, or both at the protective custody hearing. The project transforms the traditional conflict and litigation-based model of dealing with abused and neglected children into a more family-friendly model that encourages early parental cooperation, rapid engagement in services, and development of a circle of supportive relatives and friends. As of this report, 80 children were accepted into the pilot program. LACSN is very proud to report that 41 of those children have returned home and their cases have been closed. Of the remaining 39 children, 9 are living with another parent, 12 are with a relative, and 18 have been placed in foster care.</p>

Strategic Plan Activity Code	Current CIP Initiatives	Status
<p data-bbox="92 256 277 396">Linked to AP 2.1 and ED 4.1 (continued)</p> <p data-bbox="92 1365 277 1422">(continued on next page)</p>	<p data-bbox="302 256 760 289">Foster Parent Mentoring Project</p> <p data-bbox="302 1166 823 1198">Licensed Kinship Caregivers Project</p> <p data-bbox="302 1382 600 1414">(continued on next page)</p>	<p data-bbox="869 256 1995 730">The Foster Parent Mentoring Project was started by Sierra Association of Foster Families (SAFF) and has received funding from CIP in 2009. When a child is placed in a foster home, social service notifies the Sierra Association of Foster Families. As soon as possible, SAFF matches the newly licensed foster parents with a volunteer foster parent mentor who is trained in a wide range of topics including community resources, interpersonal relations, and the social service and legal systems. The Association provides mentoring and training for mentors throughout all of Northern Nevada and Pahrump (in southern Nevada). Over the past 12 months, SAFF exceeded its goals which were to improve the quality of care for children, reduce the number of placement disruptions, and increase the retention rates for foster parents, with 200 foster parents having been provided mentoring from SAFF, and 99% of the foster parents have retained their licenses and are continuing to foster.</p> <p data-bbox="869 768 1995 1128">A component of the mentoring program was offering in-home/after school academic tutoring to foster youth ages 5-18 to increase academic stability, improve academic grades and testing scores, prevent academic disruptions, increase high school graduation rates, and decrease early school terminations. For the past year, SAFF has provided 10 academic tutors for 102 youth in foster care. The total number of youth in foster care being held back a year and not progressing to an advanced grade level, who dropped out of school, or were forcibly removed from school is zero. At the beginning of the Mentoring Program, SAFF had about 5 community partners; at the conclusion of the program they have 80 community partners.</p> <p data-bbox="869 1166 1995 1417">The Licensed Kinship Caregivers Project was also started by Sierra Association of Foster Families with funding from CIP. Using relatives to provide foster care for children who are dependents of the court is an important resource not only for the stability they provide to these children, but for their ability to reduce or ameliorate the impact of the removal of the children from their parent(s). The total number of Nevada children in foster care residing in the home of a licensed foster parent is estimated at 1,404. Recognizing the</p>

Strategic Plan Activity Code	Current CIP Initiatives	Status
Linked to AP 2.1 and ED 4.1 <i>(continued)</i>	<p>Licensed Kinship Caregivers Project</p> <p>Regional Partnership Grant</p>	<p>special challenges faced by caretakers, this project provided ongoing training to kinship caregivers on a wide range of topics. All classes were provided to licensed kinship foster parents from Washoe County and the rural communities. The Dependency Court Proceedings class and Grief/Loss classes were provided to licensed kinship foster parents from Clark County. Dr. Joseph Galata, SAFF Executive Director, is also available to licensed kinship foster parents as requested, and as a special advocate for grandparents.</p> <p>Regional Partnership Grant - Funding subgranted to CIP from DCFS through a federal regional partnership grant allowed a three-hour session taught by Ira Chasnoff, M.D., on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Alcohol Related Neurological Disorders as part of the AOC's Specialty Court Conference December 2-4, 2009 at the Peppermill in Reno, NV. Conference evaluations showed Dr. Chasnoff was very well-received having scored a 4.9 out of a possible 5.0 rating. The 147 attendees included Nevada Judges from District, Municipal and Justice Courts, attorneys, law enforcement, treatment providers, and licensed clinical social workers. After the conference, the AOC Specialty Court Coordinator communicated to the CIP Coordinator that several participants approached her after the conference to share that they thought Dr. Chasnoff was one of the best presenters at the conference, and what an engaging speaker he had been. The Specialty Court Coordinator would highly recommend Dr. Chasnoff as a speaker at future conferences/trainings.</p>
DC1.1	Send up to three representatives to the annual National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data and Technology conference	<p>Sponsored an AOC Court Research Analyst to attend the National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data and Technology conference on 06/22-24/09. A report on the conference with recommendations regarding data collection and exchanges was provided to the CIP Select Committee at the July 17, 2009, meeting.</p> <p>AOC staff, working with CIP staff, our contract liaison Joanne Brown, National Resource Center on Legal and Judicial Issues, and a representative from Chapin Hall, developed a worksheet and resultant internal database for tracking data for the Early Representation Pilot Project.</p>

Data Collection, Analysis, and Sharing (DC) or “Data” Strategy DC3

Develop data exchange requirements

Strategic Plan Activity Code	Current CIP Initiatives	Status
<p>DC3.1</p> <p><i>(continued on next page)</i></p>	<p>Review National Exchange Model and prioritize implementation order of exchanges in Nevada</p> <p><i>(continued on next page)</i></p>	<p>AOC Deputy Director of Judicial Programs and Services and Interim Deputy Director of Information Technology participated in a National Data Exchange Modeling Meeting in Austin, TX, on September 10-11, 2009, to work on creating the templates for administrative exchanges such as appointment of counsel. A good start was made on three administrative exchanges, the Notice of Hearing, Representation Notification, and Placement Change Notification.</p> <p>The advantage of an automated and shared Notice of Hearing between court and agency case management systems is that it can be used across all court hearing types. A request to schedule a hearing can come from an agency attorney, parent attorney, the agency, the court, a child attorney or GAL (Guardian ad Litem) and the Judge or clerk for the court (e.g., deputy clerk, judicial assistant, case manager, court coordinator, etc.) can schedule.</p> <p>A court will typically receive a request for appointment of an attorney; however, the court can appoint representation on its own motion. The document is for the appointment of attorneys (e.g., for the child, parent, Guardian ad Litem, etc.), or may be for a program (person or organization). An exchange of the Representation Notification is from the court to the agency. The notification is necessary to track the continuity of representation and ensure that attorneys are called equally. It will allow for the addition or removal of appointment from a case, and tracks the client representation assigned to, the court, and the start and end date of the appointment.</p> <p>The Placement Change Notification is an exchange from the agency to the court. It is initiated by a change in placement by an appropriate case worker or supervisor in the child welfare case management system. The exchange describes a single placement of a child, and one and only one child per</p>

DC3.1 (continued)	Review National Exchange Model and prioritize implementation order of exchanges in Nevada	<p>placement notification. Previous and new location is mandatory and the agency sends this information to the court to keep the judge advised of placement changes in real time, as opposed to waiting for the next court report.</p> <p>Documentation and meeting notes have been posted to the “Wiki” under the title “IEPD’s in Development” and the link is: http://www.ncsconline.org/childwelfarewiki/index.php?title=Data_Modeling_Committee#IEPD.27s_In_Development.</p>
Data Collection, Analysis, and Sharing (DC) or “Data” Strategy DC8 Implement Video Conferencing Capabilities in Courts for use in Child Welfare Cases		
Strategic Plan Activity Code	Current CIP Initiatives	Status
DC8.1 – DC8.5	Perform business analysis and develop implementation blueprint for video conferencing capabilities	<p>The CIP Coordinator worked in conjunction with the AOC Information Technology Administrative Assistant and an AOC Court Services Analyst, to conduct a needs assessment. The assessment has been completed and the results were incorporated into a plan for implementation of videoconferencing in three pilot judicial districts.</p> <p>Contracts were developed for three pilot courts by the AOC’s Legal division for videoconferencing equipment to be delivered and installed in Humboldt, Elko, and White Pine County District Courts. A tracking form on usage was developed, distributed for review, and approved for use by the courts. Equipment has been delivered and installed in Elko, and delivered to Ely and Winnemucca. The AOC is working on connectivity issues experienced. The first quarterly reports are expected April 30, 2010. This videoconferencing equipment will be used for the purpose of utilizing remote testimony, court interpreters, and expert witnesses as related to dependency and related matters, as well as facilitating meetings and trainings.</p>

Data Collection, Analysis, and Sharing (DC) or “Data” Strategy DC9

Provide Project Management Oversight for Data Projects

Strategic Plan Activity Code	Current CIP Initiatives	Status
DC9.1	Obtain part-time Project Manager to oversee data projects identified in activities DC4.2, and DC4.3	A contract has been drafted with Aaron Gorrell (Waterhole Software, Colorado Springs, Colorado). Mr. Gorrell has been consulting with the National Center for State Courts on the National Data Exchange Project, and has worked in numerous data exchange projects in other jurisdictions, which will save time and money for the Nevada project. Once we have data from the Data Exchange Pilot Project, we will be able to identify a scope of work for the other activities identified. The pilot will be implemented in the Second Judicial District Family Court and the long term goal of the project is to implement an electronic data exchange of the dependency petition between the Second Judicial District Court Family Division case management system and the Department of Child and Family Services SACWIS system. The initial phases of the project will begin in January 2010 and end June 30, 2010. At the appropriate time, an advisory group will be appointed with representatives from the court, social services, and CIP/AOC. This is a critical first step in the much larger picture of implementing national data model exchanges as discussed in activity DC3.1 above.

APPENDIX A

**Judicial Council of the State of Nevada
COURT IMPROVEMENT FOR THE PROTECTION AND PERMANENCY
OF DEPENDENT CHILDREN (CIP) SELECT COMMITTEE**
(Revised August 27, 2009)

Justice Nancy M. Saitta, Chair
Supreme Court of Nevada

Diane J. Comeaux
Administrator
Division of Child and Family Services

William "Bill" E. Fowler
Executive Director
Nevada CASA Association, Inc.

Tom Morton
Director
Clark County Dept of Family Services

Kathleen M. O'Leary
Chief Deputy Public Defender
Washoe County Public Defender's
Office

Judge Andrew Puccinelli
District Court Judge
4th Judicial District Court

Cynthia "Cindy" Pyzel
Chief Deputy Attorney General
Office of the Nevada Attorney General

Kevin Schiller
Director
Washoe County Dept of Social
Services

Judge Deborah E. Schumacher
District Court Judge
2nd Judicial District Court

Assemblywoman Debbie Smith
Assembly District 30, Nevada

Chief Judge Teresa Sprouse
Tribal Judge
Duckwater Shoshone Tribal Court

Judge Cynthia Dianne Steel
District Court Judge
8th Judicial District Court! Family
Division

Ron Titus
Director and State Court Administrator
Administrative Office of the Courts

Erika Pike Turner, Esq.
Attorney at Law
Gordon Silver

Janice Wolf, Esq.
Attorney at Law
Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada

Members Emeritus
Mike Capello
Consultant

Judge Michael Gibbons
District Court Judge
9th Judicial District Court

Mary Herzik
Director
Washoe County CASA

Tammy Tovey Stephenson
Senior Deputy Attorney General
Office of the Nevada Attorney General

Pat Thacker
Director
Clark County CASA

Committee Staff
Sheryl A. Overstreet, CIP Coordinator
Robbie Taft, Administrative Assistant
Court Improvement Program (CIP)
Administrative Office of the Courts

APPENDIX B
LIST OF NEVADA COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

Administration for Children and Families
Administrative Office of the Courts
Attorney General's Office
Attorneys for Children
Attorneys for Parents
Bureau of Indian Affairs
Casey Family Programs
Child and Family Futures Program
Children's Bureau
Clancy Productions
Clark County Department of Family Services
Clark County Foster and Adoptive Parent Association
Clark County Special Public Defender's Office
Community Volunteers
Court Improvement Program Select Committee & Members Emeritus
Creating Effective Organizations
Department of Public Safety State Parole & Probation
District Attorney's Offices (Carson City, Clark, Lander, and Washoe Counties)
Division of Child & Family Services
Foster Parents
Government Financial Management, Inc
Great Basin CASA
Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada
National Association of Drug Court Professionals
National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators
National Foster Parents Association
National Resource Centers
Nevada CASA Association, Inc.
Nevada Indian Commission
Nevada Inter-Tribal Council
Nevada Judges, Hearing Masters, & Court Staff
Nevada Network Against Domestic Violence
Nevada State Legislature
Northeastern Nevada CASA
Sierra Association of Foster Families
State CIP Coordinators
Supreme Court & Staff
Supreme Court Clerk's Office
Supreme Court Law Library
Tru Vista Program

University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV)
University of Nevada, Reno (UNR)
Volunteer Attorneys for Rural Nevadans
Washoe County Department of Social Services
Washoe County Public Defender's Office
Washoe Legal Services
Waterhole Software, Inc.
WestCare

Table of Collaborative Partners includes agencies and individuals who have at some time worked on a CIP-related project, including our contract and subgrant partners, and/or individuals or entities (including both staff and volunteers) who share our common goal(s).