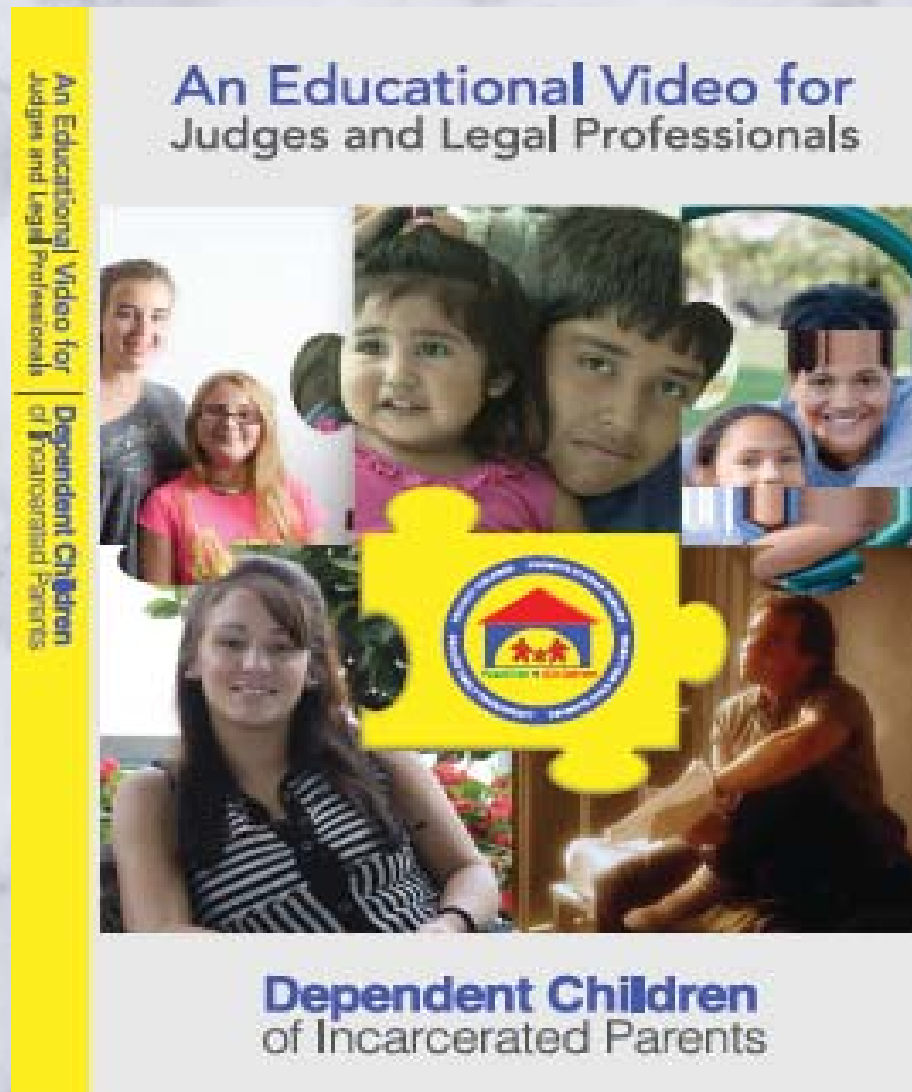


2014 Pennsylvania State Roundtable Report



Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents

May 2014

Dear Pennsylvania State Roundtable Members:

Last year, you accepted our recommendations to improve outcomes for dependent children of incarcerated parents and engagement of incarcerated parents. For the past year, the Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents Workgroup has worked diligently to initiate and bring to fruition the recommendations that you approved. Our focus this year has been continued and expanded collaboration and training and education.

1. **Collaboration**—During the past year, our workgroup has collaborated with county and state agencies including: the PA Department of Corrections (DOC); the PA department of Public Welfare Office of Children, Youth and Families; the PA Board of Probation & Parole (PBPP); the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN); the PA Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC); the Pittsburgh Child Guidance Foundation; as well as local courts. We distributed more than 20,000 *Protect Your Rights* flyers and posters to the DOC and county prisons and jails.
2. **Training and Education**—Our training and education efforts included: the production of *Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents: An Educational Video for Judges and Legal Professionals*; a chapter on Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents that will be featured in the revised Dependency Benchbook; a Public Service Announcement for PA State Correctional Institutions and County Prisons and Jails; a training curriculum for the PBPP; working with the SWAN LSI Incarceration Project; and assisting the CWRC in the development of a curriculum for child welfare professionals. Our Workgroup and/or members of our Workgroup gave or participated in presentations at the 2013 Children's Summit, the National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) 2014 Family Law Institute, and the White House! We are scheduled to present at the 2014 SWAN Conference and the NCJFCJ Annual Meeting in Chicago.

As you can see, a lot was accomplished in a short period of time due to the collaborative spirit of the workgroup and the commitment to the overarching principal that under the law, ***"Incarcerated parents have the same rights, as parents who are not incarcerated, to fully participate in the court process, to fully participate in case planning, to require the agency to make reasonable efforts towards reunification, and to have visitation and contact with their children."***

The contributions of each of the committee members were invaluable. It has been a privilege to work on this issue and we look forward to completing our tasks.

Sincerely,



Kim Berkeley Clark, Chair
Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents Workgroup

Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents Workgroup

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Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents Workgroup

2014 State Roundtable Report

In accordance with the charge of the Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents Workgroup following the 2013 State Roundtable meeting, the Workgroup focused efforts during the past year on the implementation of the approved 2013 recommendations. The Workgroup met regularly focusing on two core areas: *continued collaboration with system partners and education and training efforts.*

Collaboration

The Workgroup's 2012 State Roundtable Report recommended counties take a cross systems collaborative approach where child welfare agencies, the courts, corrections and probation/parole professionals work together to improve the outcomes for dependent children with incarcerated parents and to better engage incarcerated parents in the court process. During 2013-2014, the Workgroup continued its efforts to enhance statewide collaborative efforts by partnering more closely with the PA Department of Corrections (DOC), PA Department of Public Welfare, Office of Children, Youth and Families (DPW/OCYF), PA Board of Probation and Parole (PBPP), Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN), PA Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC), and the courts.

State Collaboration

In 2013, the Workgroup distributed over 20,000 *Protect Your Rights* flyers and posters to DOC prisons, Community Corrections Centers, county jails/prisons, PBPP offices, child welfare agencies and courts across the Commonwealth. The flyer is designed to educate incarcerated parents with a child in the foster care system about pertinent information concerning their rights and responsibilities as well as the Adoption and Safe Families Act timeframes for termination of parental rights. System partners reported to the Workgroup that the flyers have been extremely helpful to parents as well as corrections/probation/parole staff in understanding parental rights and responsibilities when a child is involved in the dependency system. The flyer is available in hard copy through the Administrative Office of PA Courts, Office of Children and Families in the Courts (OCFC) and downloadable versions in both English and Spanish are available on the OCFC website.

During 2013-2014, the Workgroup continued to collaborate with cross systems partners on several other projects including: Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents: An Educational Video for Judges and Legal Professionals; Public Service Announcement to

be aired in State Correctional Institutions and county prisons; SWAN Legal Services Initiative (LSI) Incarceration Project; enhancing training curriculum for child welfare professionals; and training PBPP staff on children of the incarcerated. More detailed information on the above mentioned projects will be discussed in the *Education and Training Efforts* section of the report.

County Collaboration

During the 2013 Children's Summit, a panel presentation was held to educate participants on this subject and challenge county teams to collaborate locally with stakeholders to address the complex issues surrounding court participation, engagement efforts, visitation and reentry planning for this population. Although a formal survey was not conducted, the 2014 Spring Leadership Roundtables revealed several Local Children's Roundtables (Adams, Allegheny, Beaver, Bedford, Berks, Blair, Butler, Crawford, Cumberland, Franklin, Forest/Warren, Indiana, Lancaster, Lycoming, Washington, Westmoreland and York) are enhancing relationships and increasing efforts with their county prisons around this topic particularly in regards to enhanced family-friendly visitation. It was also reported that some counties have included prison wardens and other prison officials on their Local Children's Roundtables. The above mentioned counties are not an exhaustive list, as others may be working on this issue as well.

Education and Training Efforts

In 2012, the Workgroup surveyed judges, children and youth administrators, prison superintendents and county wardens to gain more insight about how system stakeholders view engagement of incarcerated parents in the dependency process. The survey results underscored the critical need for more education and training on the topic for all stakeholders. During 2013-2014, the Workgroup has focused efforts on educating system partners. Most notable is the *Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents: An Educational Video for Judges and Legal Professionals*. Other education efforts include: a section in the revised PA Dependency Benchbook, Public Service Announcement for prisons/jails, PBPP training, SWAN LSI Incarceration Project, CWRC Curriculum on Engaging Incarcerated Parents and the upcoming 2014 SWAN Conference.

Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents: An Educational Video for Judges and Legal Professionals

In 2013, how best to train judges and legal professionals about the complexities of serving dependent children and their incarcerated parents was a primary focus of the Workgroup. After contemplating various types of training options, the Workgroup decided the development of an educational video would be the best approach.

Workgroup members agreed that the training video would be most cost effective, most sustainable, save travel time and could be utilized in various training forums.

The Pittsburgh Child Guidance Foundation, whose mission includes helping members of the community and government implement programs designed to improve the well-being of children with incarcerated parents, partnered with the Workgroup to financially support the development of the training video.

Over the past 15 months, the Workgroup has diligently worked to produce this video, which to our knowledge is the only one of its kind in the country. The video is divided into five chapters: (1) Confronting the Biases and Busting the Myths Head On; (2) Trauma; (3) The Court Process: The Roles of the Judicial Officer and the Attorneys; (4) Visitation; and (5) Permanency Planning. The video features the Honorable Kim Berkeley Clark, Administrative Judge, Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County, several experienced attorneys on this subject; an expert on trauma and most importantly children and families. The video also includes a Discussion Guide to accompany the video to help generate conversation among stakeholders. A copy of the Discussion Guide is attached to this report (See Attachment). Although this video was specifically designed for judges and attorneys, there are several chapters which are relevant to all system partners particularly the chapters on Biases & Myths, trauma and visitation.

The video will be distributed to courts and Local Children's Roundtables across the state as well as other interested stakeholders. In addition, the video can be viewed by all stakeholders on the OCFC website.

PA Dependency Benchbook Section on Children of Incarcerated Parents

In 2013, the Pennsylvania State Roundtable approved the Workgroup's recommendation to add a separate section to the revised PA Dependency Benchbook specifically on incarcerated parents and their children. The chapter on incarcerated parents emphasizes the overarching theme of the Workgroup: "Incarcerated parents have the same rights, as parents who are not incarcerated, to fully participate in the court process, to fully participate in case planning, to require the agency to make reasonable efforts towards reunification, and to have visitation and contact with their children."

The chapter provides useful and practical information and guidance to judges and judicial officers on engaging incarcerated parents in the court process and underscores the importance of maintaining the bond and relationship between incarcerated parents and their children. Along with the practical information, the chapter includes best practice recommendations for courts who wish to embrace the overarching principle. The chapter will be included in the revised Benchbook slated to be distributed in July 2014.

Public Service Announcement for PA State Correctional Institutions and County Prisons/Jails

The Workgroup partnered with the DOC and the Pittsburgh Child Guidance Foundation to produce a Public Service Announcement (PSA) to be aired in 28 state correctional institutions. The PSA highlights the rights and responsibilities of incarcerated parents with a child in the dependency system. The PSA outlines the information in the *Protect Your Rights* flyer and emphasizes the need for parents to act during their incarceration on completing family service plan goals, participating in court proceedings and the importance of maintaining contact with their child. The PSA will also be available to any local prison/jail. It is anticipated that the PSA will be aired beginning in the summer of 2014.

PA Board of Probation and Parole (PBPP) Training Curriculum

The Workgroup partnered with the PBPP to develop a training curriculum for parole agents on children of the incarcerated. The curriculum highlights the number of children in Pennsylvania with an incarcerated parent, and provides information on the dependency system, trauma, tools and techniques for engaging families and specific information on how Family Group Decision Making can be utilized for successful reentry into society. Workgroup members were instructors for the first training in the fall of 2013.

SWAN LSI Incarceration Project

In 2013, Workgroup members learned of a parallel committee operating under SWAN addressing the barriers counties experience because of a lack of specific, readily available information about county prisons. The SWAN LSI Incarceration Project is in the process of developing a single resource manual for caseworkers, casework supervisors, paralegals and other stakeholders to assist with case planning, visitation and enhanced engagement efforts with incarcerated parents involved in the dependency system.

Over the past year, that Committee has continued to compile information from all 67 counties, to include in the SWAN LSI Incarceration Resource Manual. While editing continues to occur, the Committee has set a goal to have the SWAN LSI Incarceration Resource Manual submitted for approval by summer 2014.

Beyond the work that is occurring on the SWAN LSI Incarceration Resource Manual, in September 2013, two SWAN LSI Coordinators, who are also members of the State Roundtable's Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents Workgroup, presented to over 100 SWAN LSI Paralegals from across the state. The presentation was titled, "Incarcerated Parents-Breaking Free of the Stigma and Myths that Surround Working

with Incarcerated Parents.” Information from the State Roundtable Workgroup was presented, and the SWAN LSI Paralegals were challenged with taking action to do what they can with their county partners to promote a sense of urgency to address this issue. A similar presentation was provided to SWAN Management and Practice staff in 2014.

Enhancing Child Welfare Training Curriculum on Engaging Incarcerated Parents

Based on results of the 2012 survey, the Workgroup also prioritized improved training for child welfare professionals about better engaging families dealing with incarceration. The Pennsylvania CWRC is currently in the final stages of redesigning its training curriculum *305: Engaging Incarcerated Parents*. The Workgroup was invited to serve as subject matter experts on a quality assurance committee, evaluating the current curriculum with an instructional design expert. The Workgroup provided significant suggestions for updates and improvements based on recommendations from the 2012 and 2013 State Roundtable Reports.

The new curriculum will target the knowledge and abilities necessary to serve families with incarcerated parents effectively, with an increased understanding of incarcerated parents’ rights, as well as the benefits to a child’s permanency and well-being. Participants will confront myths and biases, acquire resources, and practice skills relevant to the child welfare professional’s daily tasks. A blended delivery method will offer participants a one-hour online study that will serve as a prerequisite for the six-hour, skills-based classroom session. The curriculum will emphasize cross system collaboration and highlight successful programs throughout Pennsylvania. Under the Workgroup’s direction, the curriculum promotes values and actions that support child welfare professionals to engage incarcerated parents to fully participate in the court process, case planning, and in visitation and/or contact with their child. The curriculum will also support child welfare professionals to make reasonable efforts towards reunification. The revised curriculum is scheduled for completion in June 2014. The Workgroup highly recommends child welfare professionals take full advantage of this course to increase their knowledge base and gain valuable engagement strategies that will be useful in working with dependent children and their incarcerated parents.

SWAN Conference

The Workgroup was selected to present a three-hour training institute on this subject at the *22nd Annual Pennsylvania Permanency Conference, Finding Futures* in July 2014. The presentation is entitled: *Improving the Future State of Dependent Children with Incarcerated Parents: A Collaborative Approach*. This presentation will include a panel of systems professionals discussing the work of the Pennsylvania State Roundtables’ Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents Workgroup including its collaborative efforts, recommendations, and the recently released training video for judges and legal

professionals. In addition to the Workgroup members, the panel will feature systems partners, a parent and youth with experience in the subject matter.

Pennsylvania Wardens' Association

The 2012 survey also revealed a need for training wardens of local county prisons and jails. Accordingly, the Workgroup will begin training with the Warden's Association, similar to the training done for PBPP that will: highlight the number of children in Pennsylvania with an incarcerated parent and provide information on the dependency system, trauma, tools and techniques for engaging families and specific information on how Family Group Decision Making can be utilized for successful reentry into society.

Data Collection

As stated in both the 2012 and 2013 State Roundtable Reports, no good data exists either nationally or Pennsylvania specific about the number of children in the dependency system with an incarcerated parent. The Workgroup previously recommended the need to better gather and utilize reliable county specific and statewide data on this population. As part of the 2012 and 2013 recommendations, the Workgroup recommended that the Common Pleas Case Management System Dependency Orders be revised to include check boxes to indicate whether a parent is incarcerated, if it is a mother or a father who is incarcerated, and whether or not they are incarcerated in a federal, state or local correctional facility. The Workgroup further recommended that the field be *mandatory* and that the data be collected and reported both county specific and statewide. The Workgroup submitted a request to the PA Juvenile Court Procedural Rules Forms Sub-committee in early 2013 outlining the above request. To date, the Workgroup has not been notified whether or not the request has been discussed or approved.

This year, the Workgroup discussed the possibility of collecting information on incarcerated parents in the newly created Child Welfare Information Solution system. The Workgroup would like to continue those conversations with a representative from DPW/OCYF to determine if this is possible.

Final Note: National Spotlight on Children of the Incarcerated

The issue of children and incarcerated parents has made the national spotlight and our Workgroup has been prominently featured in the national arena. Because of our work in Pennsylvania, Judge Clark was invited to the White House to participate in a day-long event that focused on Children of Incarcerated Parents in June 2013. Judge Clark moderated a panel discussion of national experts on the needs of the caregivers for children of incarcerated parents. A highlight of the event was the release of the Sesame Street Workshop video: LITTLE Children BIG Challenges – Incarceration www.sesamestreet.org/parents/topicsandactivities/toolkits/incarceration.

This most recent resiliency initiative offered by Sesame Street is an online, bilingual multimedia toolkit featuring videos, activities and resources to assistance families in dealing with incarceration.

Judge Clark was invited to the White House again in August of 2013, to attend a day long symposium that featured experts who presented research on every issue involving children of incarcerated parents.

The Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention (OJJDP) is also focusing on children of incarcerated parents. OJJDP Director, Robert Listenbee, attended both White House events.

The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) invited Judge Clark to present at their Family Law Institute in Monterey California in March 2014. The presentation was well-received and Judge Clark has been invited to present at NCJFCJ's annual Conference in Chicago in July 2014.

The White House, OJJDP, and NCJFCJ have requested copies of the Workgroup's educational video for judges and legal professionals and the PSA.

Recommendations:

The Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents Workgroup respectfully submits to the State Roundtable the following recommendations:

1. Encourage dependency judges, legal professionals and other stakeholders working with dependent youth with incarcerated parents to view the educational video and discuss the video concepts with their Local Children's Roundtables.
2. Follow up with the AOPC Judicial Automation Department the previous request to CPCMS court orders to collect data on dependent children of incarcerated parents;
3. Discuss with the DPW/OCYF the possibility of collecting data through the Child Welfare Information Solution;
4. Continue support of the PA CWRC effort to enhance the Engaging Incarcerated Parent Training Curriculum;
5. Continue support of the SWAN LSI Incarceration Toolkit project;
6. Continue collaborative efforts with the DOC, PBPP and other key stakeholders to address statewide systemic issues; and
7. Utilization of Workgroup members to act as ambassadors to assist counties in the implementation of the Workgroup's recommendations on the local level.