



# **2019 State Roundtable Report Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education**



***“When you know better,  
you do better.”***

***~ Maya Angelou***

**Committee Chairperson**

***Honorable Jennifer L. Rogers  
Court of Common Pleas of Luzerne County***

# Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee

## Chairperson

**Honorable Jennifer L. Rogers**  
Court of Common Pleas of Luzerne County

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Michelle C. Kahan, Esquire  
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## **Background**

At the 2011 Pennsylvania State Roundtable (SRT), discussions began regarding the need to provide educational opportunities and support to all judicial officers including Juvenile Court Hearing Officers. To aid in this SRT goal the Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee, originally co-chaired by the Honorable Carol Van Horn, Court of Common Pleas of Franklin & Fulton Counties and the Honorable Albert Masland, Court of Common Pleas of Cumberland County, was convened and asked to develop educational sessions specifically for Dependency Hearing Officers. On November 9, 2011, the first educational session was held and the experience was very welcomed by the Hearing Officers that were able to attend this momentous event.

In 2012, there was a change in leadership and the Honorable Joy Reynolds McCoy, Court of Common Pleas of Lycoming County, chaired the Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee through May 2018. During her time as the Chairperson, the educational sessions went from occurring annually to now being offered bi-annually. In addition, there was a dramatic increase in Hearing Officers participating in the educational sessions as well as attending the Children's Roundtable Summit.

Since its convening, the Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee has organized ten (10) educational sessions for Dependency Hearing Officers, including the educational session held on October 4, 2018, found in the "progress and update" section of this report. The contents of previous educational sessions are available for your review in *APPENDIX I*.

As of April 2019, there are 71 Dependency Juvenile Court Hearing Officers located in 34 out of the 60 (57%) judicial districts in Pennsylvania. See *APPENDIX II* for the current number of Hearing Officers that are hearing dependency matters in each judicial district.

## **Progress and Update on Approved 2018 State Roundtable Recommendations**

The Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee organized one education session, which was held on October 4, 2018. Progress made on the 2018 SRT recommendation is presented in further detail throughout this section of the report.

- 1. Ongoing development of semi-annual training for Hearing Officers, with permission to provide these trainings anytime throughout the year at a central training site.**

### Fall 2018 Education Session

On October 4, 2018, an educational session was held at the Sheraton Harrisburg/Hershey Hotel, Harrisburg, PA. There were 45 Hearing Officers and 4 Judges in attendance. The session was a full day and included the following topics:

- Mental Health Issues in Dependency Court: Bridging the Medico-legal Information Gap
- I Do Not Qualify for Homebound Instruction, but I refuse to Go to School – Help Me!
- Family First Prevention Services Act: What Dependency Courts Can Stop Doing
- Ethical Situations and Considerations in Dependency
- Case Law Update

The following faculty dedicated their time, knowledge and passion to the topics of the session:

**Dr. Shawna Brent, MD, Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist**

**Honorable Jennifer L. Rogers, Court of Common Pleas of Luzerne County**

**Honorable Christylee L. Peck, Court of Common Pleas of Cumberland County**

**Kate Cramer Lawrence, Esquire, Juvenile Court Hearing Officer, Cumberland County**

**Stephenie Strayer, Judicial Program Analyst, Office of Children and Families in the Courts**

Participation evaluation results showed an overall rating of 4.6/5.0 and an overall relevancy of 4.7/5.0. Some participants asked for future education sessions to focus on parents with mental health concerns and addressing safety of the children; and what courts need to know about children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. A complete overview of the evaluation can be found in ***APPENDIX III***.

### Spring 2019 Education Session

Previously the Spring Education Sessions were held in April, however the Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee has elected to move the Spring training to a later timeframe. The Committee was concerned that with the Spring Education Session and the Children's Roundtable Summit being held during the same month, this could possibly prevent some Hearing Officers from being able to attend both events. The Committee strongly encourages Hearing Officers to attend the Children's Roundtable Summit and fully recognizes the importance of them being a part of their county's team. In order to support their attendance at both educational opportunities, the Spring 2019 Education Session is scheduled to occur on June 6, 2019. An update on this education session will be provided in the 2020 State Roundtable Report.

### Juvenile Court Procedural Rule 1182 Distance Education Training

On July 30, 2018, Thomas B. Darr, Court Administrator of Pennsylvania announced that the Juvenile Court Procedural Rule 1182 Distance Education Training was available on the Juvenile Court Judge's Commission (JCJC) educational platform. Jurisdictions can submit the Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Certification Training Request Form for an individual to be given access to the online course. As of April 2019, 10 individuals have completed the Juvenile Court Procedural Rule 1182 Distance Education Training and have become new Hearing Officers for the Dependency System.

**The Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee respectfully submits to the Pennsylvania State Roundtable the following recommendation:**

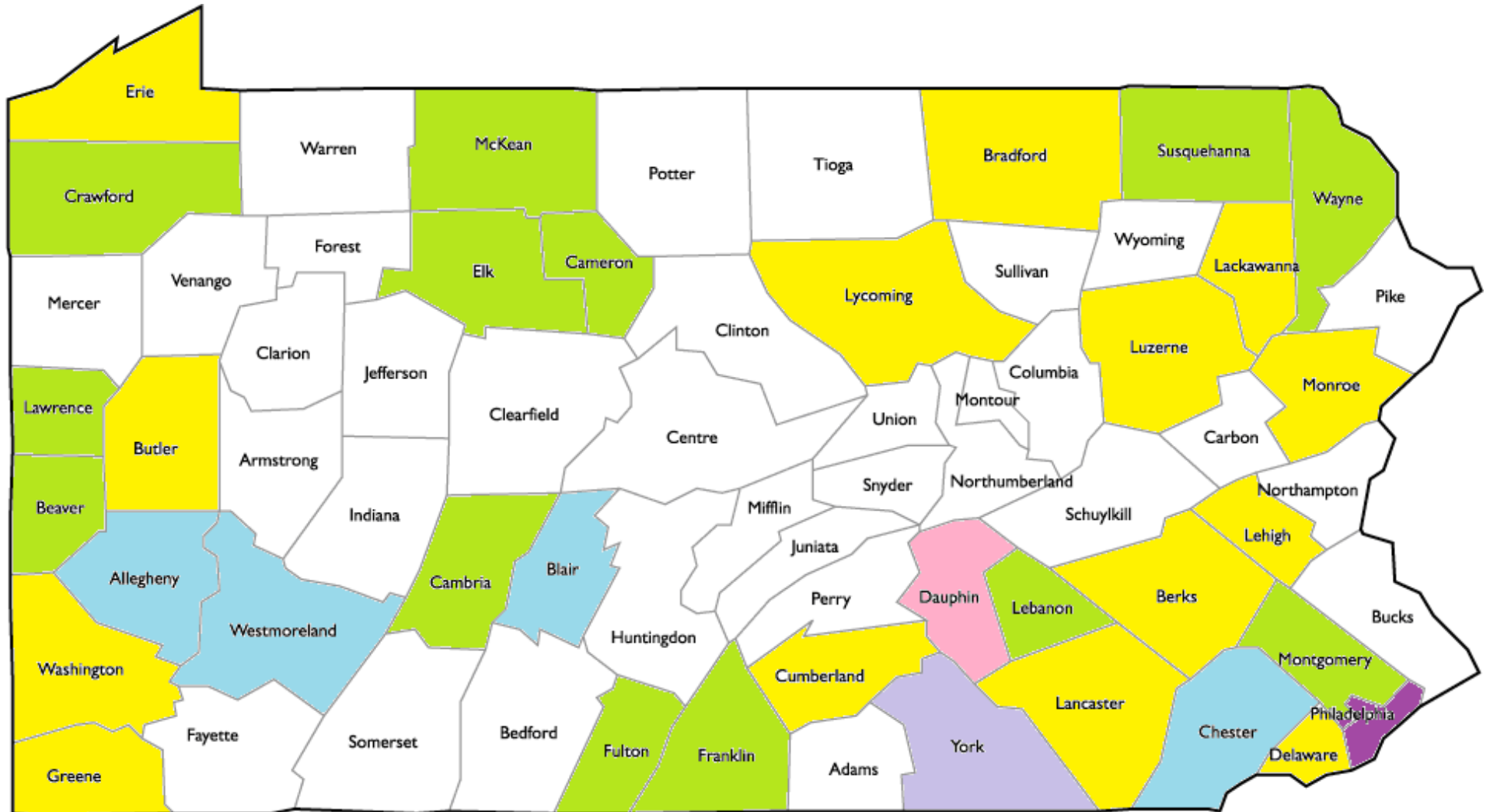
- 1. Ongoing development of semi-annual training for Juvenile Court Hearing Officers, with permission to provide these trainings anytime throughout the year at a central training site.**

## Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Sessions (2011 to Present)

<b>Date of Educational Session</b>	<b>Content Material Presented</b>
November 9, 2011 (Initial Session)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pennsylvania Dependency Benchbook</li> <li>• Courtroom Management</li> <li>• Ethical Considerations</li> <li>• Engaging Families in the Courtroom</li> <li>• Practice Tips for Each Hearing Type</li> </ul>
September 3, 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety Assessment and Planning</li> <li>• Act 55, Family Finding</li> <li>• Safety Analysis of Family Finding</li> </ul>
September 3, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grief, Loss and Trauma</li> <li>• Using Kinship to Reduce Grief, Loss and Trauma</li> <li>• De-Escalation in the Workplace</li> <li>• Case Law Update</li> </ul>
April 22, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieving Permanency: Compliance versus Progress</li> <li>• A Broad View: Hearing Officer Practices Across the State</li> <li>• Case Law Update</li> </ul>
September 9, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serving Older Youth</li> <li>• A Broad View: Hearing Officer Practices Across the State</li> <li>• Motivational Interviewing</li> <li>• Standards of Practice for Parent Attorneys, Guardian ad Litem and Legal Counsel</li> <li>• Case Law Update</li> </ul>
April 26, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC)</li> <li>• Act 55 Family Finding: Leading from the Bench</li> <li>• Case Law Update</li> </ul>
September 14, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Welfare 101</li> <li>• Rules of Evidence in Dependency Proceedings</li> <li>• CPCMS and Court Observation</li> <li>• Truancy: A Call to Action</li> <li>• Case Law Update</li> <li>• Understanding Age and Developmentally Appropriate Activities, Prudent Parenting and APPLA</li> </ul>

<b>Date of Educational Session</b>	<b>Content Material Presented</b>
October 4, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talking with and Engaging Children in the Courtroom</li> <li>• Engagement Strategies in the Courtroom</li> <li>• Truancy and Educational Success: Recent Legislative Changes</li> <li>• Ethical Situations and Considerations in Dependency</li> <li>• Case Law Update</li> </ul>
April 6, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Road Map to Permanency</li> <li>• The Opioid Crisis in Pennsylvania</li> <li>• Drug and Alcohol Screening, Assessments &amp; Level of Care</li> <li>• Medication Assisted Treatment &amp; Recovery</li> <li>• Ethical Situations and Considerations in Dependency</li> </ul>
October 4, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental Health Issues in Dependency Court: Bridging the Medico-legal Information Gap</li> <li>• I Do Not Qualify for Homebound Instruction, but I refuse to Go to School – Help Me!</li> <li>• Family First Prevention Services Act: What Dependency Courts Can Stop Doing</li> <li>• Ethical Situations and Considerations in Dependency</li> <li>• Case Law Update</li> </ul>

**As of April 2019, there are 71 Dependency Juvenile Court Hearing Officers located in 34 out of the 60 judicial districts in Pennsylvania**



**Number of Hearing Officers:**

**1**

**2**

**3**

**4**

**5**

**6**

## Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Session on October 4, 2018

What is your overall evaluation of the training?	4.6
How relevant was the information presented?	4.7
<b>How satisfied were you with the following sessions:</b>	
Bridging the Medico-legal Information Gap	4.9
School Refusal	4.5
What Dependency Courts Can Stop Doing	4.0
Case Law Update	4.7
Ethical Situations and Considerations	4.6

***What two things will you do differently in your dependency proceedings?***

1. Ask more about a child's mental health diagnosis, question the need for psychotropic medications and inquire if there are alternative treatment options
2. Require more evidence for family finding

***What questions do you still have about the material presented?***

1. What will be the impact of Family First Prevention Services Act?

***What topics would you like to see at the next Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Session?***

1. Mental health issues of parents and addressing safety of the children
2. Autism spectrum disorder and what the court needs to know