



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

## News for Immediate Release

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### Seven counties selected for new initiative to support abused and neglected children

**HARRISBURG** — Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Max Baer today announced the selection of seven counties to participate in the launch of the Pennsylvania State Roundtable’s **Family Engagement Initiative**. The roundtable is a collaborative effort among state and national court and child welfare leaders.

Building upon past successes, the initiative will focus on enhancements to local child dependency systems which serve abused or neglected children and their families.

“The selected counties will get training from international experts to teach them cutting-edge practices rooted in research and science to enhance the way they help children and families,” said Justice Baer. “The counties will receive resources developed specifically for them. It’s exciting to be working with such a dedicated and motivated group of court and county leaders to improve the lives of our most vulnerable children.”

The seven counties chosen include **Adams, Blair, Clinton, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Northampton and Union**. The selection process was statewide and competitive. Interested counties were required to submit a letter of interest which included signatures from the lead dependency judge, the president judge, the county commissioners and the child welfare director.

With a larger than expected number of counties applying, the selection process was rigorous. Final selections were made by the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts’ Office of Children and Families in the Courts (OCFC); the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services’ Office of Children, Youth and Families; and Justice Baer.

Factors considered in the selection process included:

- strong collaboration between county courts and children and youth agencies
- current family engagement practices
- data reviews

The **Family Engagement Initiative** was developed by the Pennsylvania State Roundtable and is supported by the OCFC and the Federal Court Improvement Program, in partnership with the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania and Department of Human Services’ Office of Children, Youth and Families.

“The initiative uses evidence-based practices that identify and meaningfully involve healthy family members and close friends in the lives of child welfare families,” said Sandy Moore, the OCFC’s director. “This requires the support of all local leaders within the selected counties.

“Some of the many outcomes we hope to see from this collaboration include increased family involvement, reduced trauma to children and a reduction in the time children are separated from those who love and care about them.”

The Pennsylvania State Roundtable plans to expand this initiative to other counties in 2018.

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