



2023 State Roundtable Report: Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education



Committee Chairperson

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

Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee

Chairperson

Honorable Jennifer L. Rogers
Family and Juvenile Court Administrative Judge
Court of Common Pleas of Luzerne County

Keith Boggess, Esquire
Juvenile Court Hearing Officer
Chester County

Kim Gillen, Esquire
Juvenile Court Hearing Officer
Carbon County

Kate Cramer Lawrence, Esquire
Juvenile Court Hearing Officer
Cumberland County

Theresa Loder, Esquire
Juvenile Court Hearing Officer
Lehigh County

Jalaine Stokes, Esquire
Juvenile Court Hearing Officer
Philadelphia County

Todd W. Weitzmann, Esquire
Juvenile Court Hearing Officer
Monroe County

Tiffany York, Esquire
Juvenile Court Hearing Officer
Beaver County

Gina Ziady, 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 was convened and asked to develop education sessions specifically for Dependency Hearing Officers. The Committee was co-chaired initially 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. 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 and attending the Children's Roundtable Summit.

In May 2018, the Honorable Jennifer L. Rogers, Court of Common Pleas of Luzerne County, became the Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee Chairperson. Under Judge Rogers' leadership, the educational sessions are now set to occur annually on the second Thursday in May and the second Thursday in October. By having a consistent schedule for educational sessions, Hearing Officers are provided with as much advanced notice as possible.

Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee Update

Since its convening, the Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee has organized or assisted in developing 17 educational sessions for Dependency Hearing Officers, including the educational sessions held in 2022, found in the "progress and update" section of this report. The topics of previous educational sessions and the number of attendees are available for your review in ***APPENDIX I***.

In October 2022, four new members were invited to join the Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee:

- Keith Boggess, Esquire, Court of Common Pleas of Chester County
- Kim Gillen, Esquire, Court of Common Pleas of Carbon County
- Jalaine Stokes, Esquire, Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia County
- Tiffany York, Esquire, Court of Common Pleas of Beaver County

The Committee selected Hearing Officers relatively new to presiding over dependency matters to vary the experience of Committee members from 1 year to 25 years. The Committee is now more representative of the experiences of Hearing Officers statewide, which currently ranges from 1 week to 42 years. In addition, with the new members, the Committee now has representation from most of the Leadership Roundtables (LRTs), except LRT 7, to better represent all Dependency Hearing Officers in Pennsylvania.

As of April 2023, 80 Dependency Juvenile Court Hearing Officers are located in 36 of the 60 (60%) judicial districts in Pennsylvania. See ***APPENDIX II*** for the current number of Hearing Officers presiding over dependency matters in each judicial district.

Progress and Update on Approved 2022 State Roundtable Recommendations

The Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee assisted the Office of Children & Families in the Courts with the education sessions held on June 2, 2022, and October 6, 2022. Progress made on the 2022 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.

Spring 2022 Hearing Officer Education Session:

On June 2, 2022, an education session was held at the Sheraton Harrisburg-Hershey Hotel. There were 43 Hearing Officers that attended this session. The session was a full day and included the following topics:

- The Intersect of Human Behavior & the Law
- Kinship Care and ICPC
- What does your CPCMS Dependency Data Say?
- Case Law Updates

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

- **Honorable Jennifer L. Rogers**, Court of Common Pleas of Luzerne County
- **Sandra Moore, MSW**, Director, Office of Children & Families in the Courts
- **Wendy Lautsbaugh**, Compact Administrator, Pennsylvania Interstate Compact Unit
- **Jennifer A. Eichenlaub, MSW, MBA**, Judicial Program Analyst, Office of Children & Families in the Courts

- **Jennifer L. Doyle**, Judicial Program Analyst, Office of Children & Families in the Courts
- **Kate Cramer Lawrence, Esquire**, Hearing Officer, Court of Common Pleas of Cumberland County

Participation evaluation results showed an overall rating of 4.4/5.0 and overall relevancy of 4.5/5.0. A complete overview of the evaluation can be found in ***APPENDIX III***.

Fall 2022 Hearing Officer Education Session:

On October 6, 2022, an education session was held at the Sheraton Harrisburg-Hershey Hotel. There were 43 Hearing Officers that attended this session. The session was a full day and included the following topics:

- Autism and the Dependency Courts: Moving from Knowledge to Action
- Motivational Interviewing for Judges and Hearing Officers

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

- **Wendy J. Ross, MD, FAAP**, *Director, Jefferson Center for Autism and Neurodiversity*
- **Barbara Orr, MS**, *Orr Training Services, LLC*

A brief survey was included in the registration process and the training evaluation for Hearing Officers to self-rate their understanding and knowledge of Autism and Motivational Interviewing. The following are the survey results:

UNDERSTANDING AND KNOWLEDGE OF AUTISM	Before Education Session	After Education Session
Total Number of Responses	41 out of 45	34 out of 43
A little	14 (34%)	1 (3%)
A moderate amount	22 (54%)	25 (74%)
A lot	5 (12%)	8 (24%)

UNDERSTANDING AND KNOWLEDGE OF MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING	Before Education Session	After Education Session
Total Number of Responses	41 out of 45	34 out of 43
Not at all	8 (20%)	1 (3%)
Slightly	11 (27%)	6 (18%)
Moderately	19 (46%)	22 (65%)
Very	3 (7%)	5 (15%)

Participation evaluation results showed an overall rating of 4.7/5.0 and overall relevancy of 4.7/5.0. A complete overview of the evaluation can be found in ***APPENDIX IV***.

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.**

PREVIOUS HEARING OFFICER EDUCATION SESSIONS

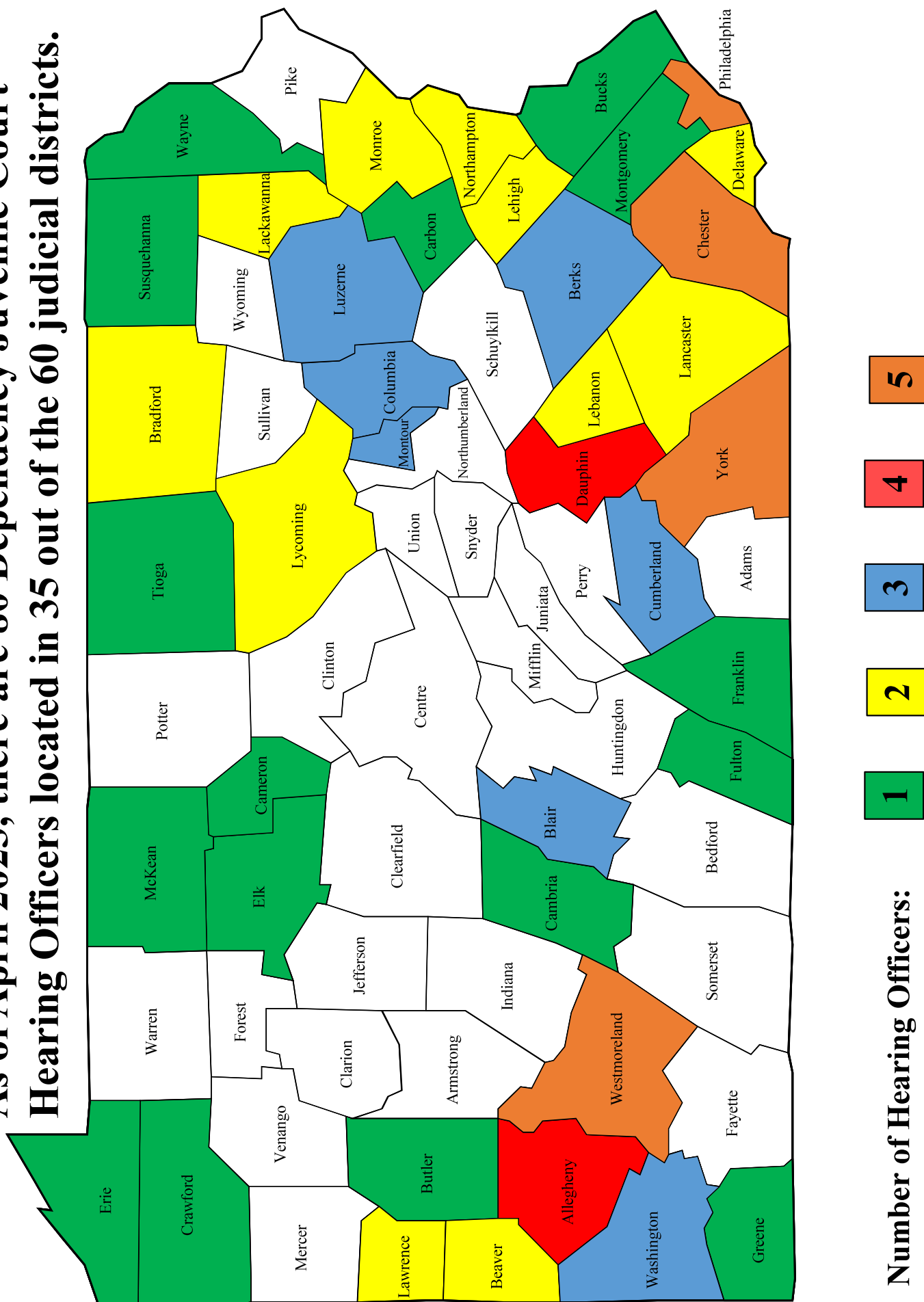
DATES OF EDUCATION SESSIONS	# OF JCHO ATTENDED	TOPICS
November 9, 2011	56	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pennsylvania Dependency Benchbook • Courtroom Management • Ethical Considerations for the Role of Hearing Officers • Engaging Families in the Courtroom • Practice Tips by each Hearing Type
September 3, 2013	35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal Safety Analysis • Act 55 Family Finding • Safety Analysis of Family Finding in Dependency Proceedings
September 3, 2014	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grief, Loss, and Trauma • Using Kinship to Reduce Grief, Loss, and Trauma • De-Escalation in the Workplace • Case Law Update
April 22, 2015	37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving Permanency: Compliance versus Progress • A Broad View: Hearing Officer Practices Across the State • Case Law Update
September 9, 2015	37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serving Older Youth • A Broad View: Hearing Officer Practices Across the State • Motivational Interviewing • Standards of Practice in Pennsylvania's Child Dependency System • Case Law Update
April 26, 2016	22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) • Act 55 Family Finding: Leading from the Bench • Case Law Update
September 14, 2016	45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Welfare 101 • Rules of Evidence in Dependency Proceedings • CPCMS and Court Observations

September 14, 2016 <i>(continued)</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truancy: A Call to Action • Understanding Age and Developmentally Appropriate Activities, Prudent Parenting and APPLA • Case Law Update
June 6, 2017	69	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory Pa.R.J.C.P. 1182 Training
October 4, 2017	28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking with and Engaging Children in the Courtroom • Engagement Strategies in the Courtroom • Truancy and Educational Success: Recent Legislative Changes • Ethical Situations and Considerations in Dependency • Case Law Update
April 6, 2018	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road Map to Permanency • The Opioid Crisis in Pennsylvania • Drug and Alcohol Screening, Assessments & Level of Care • Medication-Assisted Treatment & Recovery • Ethical Situations and Considerations in Dependency
October 4, 2018	45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
June 6, 2019	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable Efforts: What are they? What consequences do they hold? What does research, case law, and data tell us? • What is Autism Spectrum Disorder? • When Dependency Court and Autism Intersect
October 3, 2019	41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pennsylvania Dependency Benchbook: Highlights from the 3rd Edition • Best Practices and Alternatives to Congregate Care • Congregate Care Youth Panel • Case Law Update

PREVIOUS HEARING OFFICER EDUCATION SESSIONS

2020		n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No educational sessions were held due to the pandemic
June 3, 2021		66	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child Safety Legal Analysis Kinship Care & Child Placements with Emergency Caregivers Drug Testing in Child Welfare Case Law Update
October 7 & 8, 2021		32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Judicial Academy on Reasonable Efforts
June 2, 2022		43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Intersect of Human Behavior & the Law (Benchbook Resource Companion) Kinship Care and ICPC What does your CPCMS Dependency Data say? Case Law Update
October 6, 2022		43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Autism and the Dependency Courts: Moving from Knowledge to Action Motivational Interviewing for Judges and Hearing Officers
July 2018 to April 2023		47	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pa.R.J.C.P. 1182 Distance Education Training

Number of Hearing Officers:



Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Session on June 2, 2022

What is your overall evaluation of the training?	4.4 out of 5
How relevant was the information presented?	4.5 out of 5
<i>How satisfied were you with the following sessions:</i>	
The Intersect of Human Behavior & the Law	4.6 out of 5
Kinship Care & ICPC	4.3 out of 5
What does your CPCMS Dependency Data say?	3.9 out of 5
Case Law Update	4.9 out of 5

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

1. Encourage attorneys to be more involved in family finding for their clients
2. Pay more attention to the children who have been in care for a long time and insist on getting them permanency
3. Periodically review data to look for trends and areas that need improvement

What questions do you still have about the material presented?

1. More guidance on the data, what it means, and what the court should look into further

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

1. Kinship Care
2. Mental Health

Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Session on October 6, 2022

What is your overall evaluation of the training?	4.7 out of 5
How relevant was the information presented?	4.7 out of 5
<i>How satisfied were you with the following sessions:</i>	
Autism and the Dependency Courts: Moving from Knowledge to Action	4.7 out of 5
Motivational Interviewing for Judges and Hearing Officers	4.6 out of 5

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

1. Pay attention for cues that parties are on the spectrum
2. Develop a more child-friendly atmosphere
3. Use more affirmations and fewer instances of praise
4. Ask more open-ended questions

What questions do you still have about the material presented?

1. How to address parents on the Autism Spectrum which impairs or compromises their parenting skills?

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

1. More on Motivational Interviewing to develop skills further