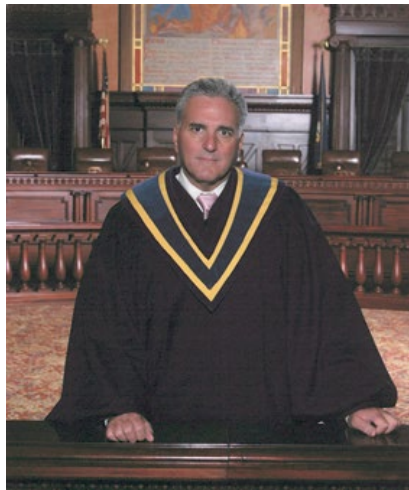


## Chief Justice Max Baer



Justice Max Baer was elected to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania in November of 2003, assumed his duties on January 5, 2004 and was retained in 2013. On April 1, 2021, he was sworn in as the 57<sup>th</sup> Chief Justice of Pennsylvania. Prior to his election to the Supreme Court, Justice Baer served on the Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County from January of 1990 to December of 2003. He spent the first 9½ of those years in Family Division, and was the Administrative Judge of the Division for 5½ years. During his tenure, Justice Baer implemented far-reaching reforms to both Juvenile Court and Domestic Relations, earning him statewide and national recognition. Justice Baer eventually was assigned to the Civil Division, where he continued to distinguish himself until assuming his new duties on the Supreme Court. In acknowledgment of his innovations in family court, in 1997, Justice Baer was named Pennsylvania's Adoption Advocate of the Year. In 1998, the Federal Department of Health and Human Services presented him with the Adoption 2002 Excellence Award for Judicial Innovation. He was honored for receipt of this award at a White House ceremony presided over by President and Mrs. Clinton.

In 1998, the Domestic Relations Association of Pennsylvania honored Justice Baer for his years of dedicated service to Pennsylvania families, and in 2000, the Pennsylvania Bar Association named him Child Advocate of the Year. In 2003, the Justice accepted the Champion of Children's Award from the Homeless Children's Education Fund, and in 2004, was recognized as "most valuable peacemaker" by Pennsylvania's Council of Mediators. In 2005, he was awarded the Three Rivers Youth Nellie Award for Civic Leadership. Justice Baer is the former Chairperson of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania Domestic Relations Procedural Rules Committee and an ex officio representative to the Juvenile Court Judges Commission. He has served on the Joint State Government Commissions on Adoption Law and Services to Children and Youth, and is the former chair of the Pennsylvania Conference of State Trial Judges Family Law Section and a former member of the Conference's Education Committee.

The Justice has served as a guest professor at Carnegie Mellon University over the years and has been a frequent lecturer to professional and lay groups throughout Pennsylvania on various issues. He has also served on numerous Boards, including Family Services of Western Pennsylvania, Catholic Charities, and the Consumer Credit Counseling Corporation. Justice Baer was recognized for his leadership in helping dependent children find permanent, loving families in the Casey Family Program Report, "How

are the Children? Inspiring Hope. Renewing Vision. Influencing Action.” (May 2010) Judge Baer wrote two chapters for The Judge’s Book, a publication of the National Conference of State Trial Judges; authored “Custody Wars – The Creation of a New Weapon of Mass Destruction,” 21 PA Family Lawyer, Issue No. 4, 1999, and Family Law and Civility; Can They Coexist? 24 Family Lawyer, Issue No. 1, 2002; and was a guest columnist for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, commenting on the Elian Gonzales case.

In 2005, Justice Baer assumed leadership of statewide dependency system reform efforts. The statewide reform, initially led by Justice Baer, involved the creation of many cutting-edge innovations found only in Pennsylvania! These include the creation of the Children’s Roundtable structure, the Office of Children & Families in the Courts, the Mission & Guiding Principles for Pennsylvania’s Child Dependency Court System, the Pennsylvania Dependency Benchbook, and multiple educational opportunities for judges, hearing officers, attorneys, and child welfare professionals.

Under Justice Baer’s leadership groundbreaking practices including Family Finding, Crisis/Rapid Response Family Meetings, three-month judicial reviews, and the bi-annual Children’s Summit were established. His leadership of these and other far-reaching reforms to Pennsylvania’s courts and child welfare system’s efforts had impressive outcomes. Since these innovations began, Pennsylvania safely reduced the number of children in foster care from almost 22,000 to less than 13,000, giving these children permanent homes and a far better chance at life. The State has also reduced the number of children entering the child welfare system, the length of time a child spends there, and increased the use of kinship care for those children who require out-of-home placement, resulting in healthier and better-adjusted youth. These accomplishments saved taxpayers over \$300 million. Because of these successes, which continue unabated, Pennsylvania has become recognized nationally as a model system, and multiple states are now attempting to implement the innovative reforms that began here.

In 2023 a non-profit organization was created to continue Chief Justice Baer’s legacy and support of foster youth. That organization has created a Chief Justice Max Baer Children’s Summit Youth Scholarship Program. The statewide program will provide four two-year college or vocational education scholarships to selected current or former dependent youth. The first set of scholarship awards will be made at the 2026 Children’s Summit.

***In honor and recognition of Chief Justice Baer’s leadership, innovation, and vision effective March 2024, our bi-annual Children’s Summit will henceforth be known as the Chief Justice Max Baer Children’s Summit. May his love, spirit, and commitment continue to inspire us to provide the most effective and efficient services possible to the children and families of Pennsylvania.***

More information regarding Chief Justice Baer’s legacy and the bi-annual Chief Justice Max Baer Children’s Summit Youth Scholarships can be found at <https://justicemaxbaermemorialfunds.com>