

State Roundtable Report:  
**Juvenile Court**  
**Hearing Officer Education**

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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

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  
Juvenile Court Hearing Officer  
Washington County

## Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts/ Office of Children & Families in the Courts

Jennifer A. Eichenlaub, MSW, MBA  
*Judicial Program Analyst*

Cori Dunn, Esquire  
*Judicial Program Analyst*

Sandra Moore, MSW  
*Director*

Elke Moyer  
*Administrative Associate/Graphic Designer*



## 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 who were able to attend this momentous event.

There was a change in leadership in 2012, 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 19 educational sessions for Dependency Hearing Officers, including the educational sessions held in 2023, 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*.

As of April 2024, 81 Dependency Juvenile Court Hearing Officers are located in 39 of the 60 (65%) 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 2023 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 May 11, 2023, and October 12, 2023. Progress made on the 2023 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 2023 Hearing Officer Education Session:

On May 11, 2023, an education session was held at the Sheraton Harrisburg-Hershey Hotel. There were 44 Hearing Officers who attended this session. The session was a full day and included the following topics:

- Understanding the Priority of Kinship Care
- State Roundtable's Priorities and Updates
- Ethical Situations and Considerations
- Case Law Update

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
- **Honorable Tina M. Boyd**, Court of Common Pleas of Berks County
- **Kate Cramer Lawrence, Esquire**, Hearing Officer, Court of Common Pleas of Cumberland County
- **Marisa McClellan, Esquire**, Administrator, Dauphin County Social Services for Children & Youth
- **Christy Stanek, MSW**, Deputy Director, Office of Children & Families in the Courts
- **Cori Dunn, Esquire**, Judicial Program Analyst, Office of Children & Families in the Courts
- **Jennifer A. Eichenlaub, MSW, MBA**, Judicial Program Analyst, Office of Children & Families in the Courts
- **Stephenie Strayer**, Judicial Program Analyst, Office of Children & Families in the Courts

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

<b>UNDERSTANDING AND KNOWLEDGE OF KINSHIP CARE</b>	<b>Before Education Session</b>	<b>After Education Session</b>
<b>Total Number of Responses</b>	44 out of 49	42 out of 44
<b>Not at all</b>	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<b>Below Average</b>	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
<b>Average</b>	35 (80%)	15 (36%)
<b>Above Average</b>	8 (18%)	27 (64%)

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

Fall 2023 Hearing Officer Education Session:

On October 12, 2023, an education session was held at the Sheraton Harrisburg-Hershey Hotel. There were 42 Hearing Officers who attended this session. The session was a full day and included the following topics:

- Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee Panel
- Trauma 101
- Creating a Trauma-Informed and Responsive Court
- Human Trafficking
- Role of the Court in Child Sex Trafficking
- Application to Practice: Family Feud

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
- **Keith Boggess, Esq.**, Hearing Officer, Court of Common Pleas of Chester County
- **Kate Cramer Lawrence, Esq.**, Hearing Officer, Court of Common Pleas of Cumberland County
- **Gina Ziady, Esq.**, Hearing Officer, Court of Common Pleas of Washington County
- **Jayne Miller**, Consultant, Lakeside Global Institute
- **Onzi Travis**, Consultant, Lakeside Global Institute

- **Cori Dunn, Esq.**, Judicial Program Analyst, Office of Children & Families in the Courts
- **Kari Dwyer, BS**, Intelligence Analyst II, Pennsylvania State Police
- **Jennifer A. Eichenlaub, MSW, MBA**, Judicial Program Analyst, Office of Children & Families in the Courts

Participation evaluation results showed an overall rating of 4.5/5.0 and an overall relevancy of 4.4/5.0. 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
<b>November 9, 2011</b>	56	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pennsylvania Dependency Benchbook</li> <li>• Courtroom Management</li> <li>• Ethical Considerations for the Role of Hearing Officers</li> <li>• Engaging Families in the Courtroom</li> <li>• Practice Tips by each Hearing Type</li> </ul>
<b>September 3, 2013</b>	35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal Safety Analysis</li> <li>• Act 55, Family Finding</li> <li>• Safety Analysis of Family Finding in Dependency Proceedings</li> </ul>
<b>September 3, 2014</b>	50	<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>
<b>April 22, 2015</b>	37	<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>
<b>September 9, 2015</b>	37	<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 in Pennsylvania's Child Dependency System</li> <li>• Case Law Update</li> </ul>
<b>April 26, 2016</b>	22	<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>
<b>September 14, 2016</b>	45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Welfare 101</li> <li>• Rules of Evidence in Dependency Proceedings</li> <li>• CPCMS and Court Observations</li> </ul>

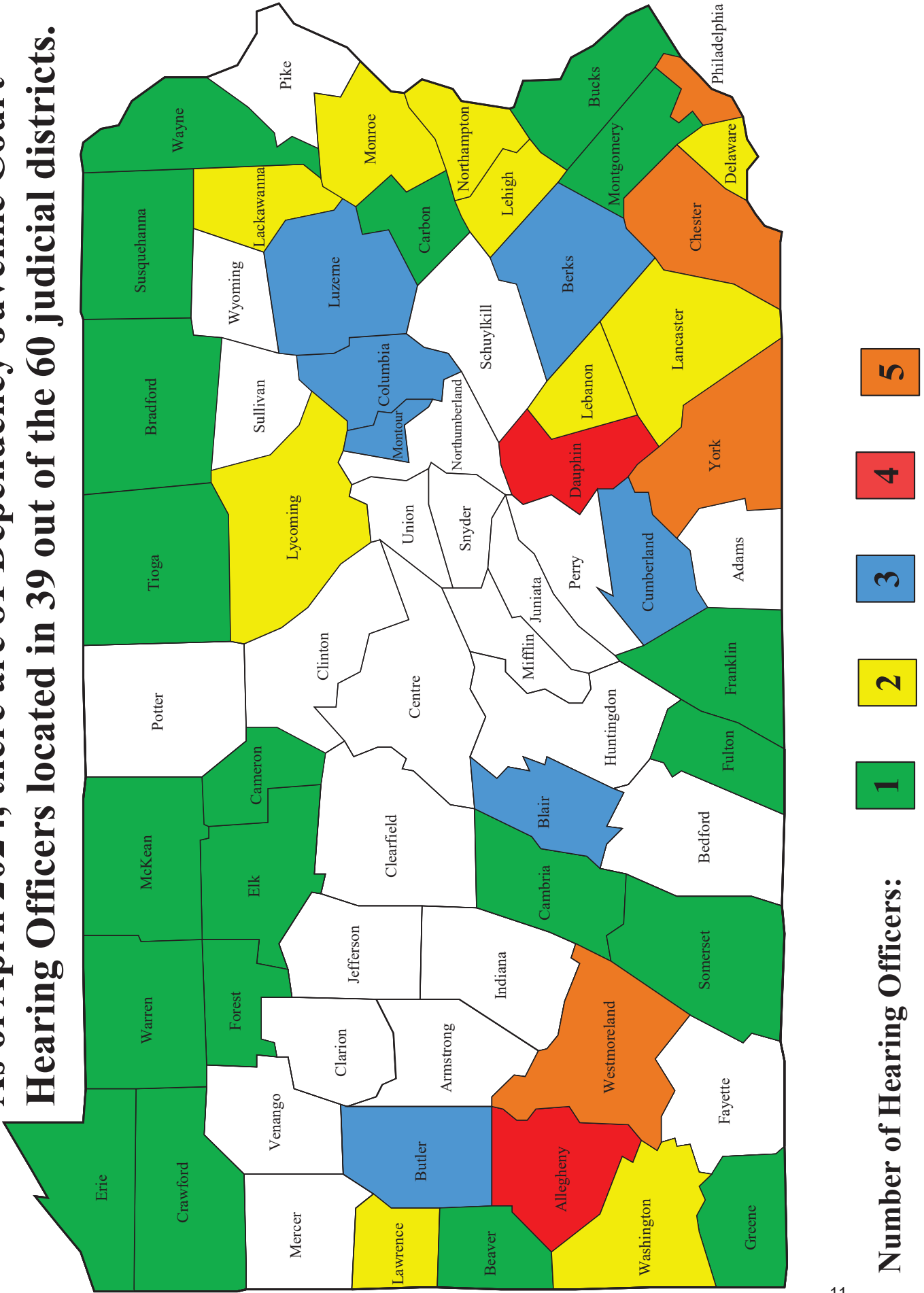
<p><b>September 14, 2016</b> <i>(continued)</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Truancy: A Call to Action</li> <li>• Understanding Age and Developmentally Appropriate Activities, Prudent Parenting and APPLA</li> <li>• Case Law Update</li> </ul>
<p><b>June 6, 2017</b></p>	<p>69</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandatory Pa.R.J.C.P. 1182 Training</li> </ul>
<p><b>October 4, 2017</b></p>	<p>28</p>	<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>
<p><b>April 6, 2018</b></p>	<p>40</p>	<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>
<p><b>October 4, 2018</b></p>	<p>45</p>	<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>
<p><b>June 6, 2019</b></p>	<p>50</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reasonable Efforts: What are they? What consequences do they hold? What does research, case law and data tell us?</li> <li>• What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?</li> <li>• When Dependency Court and Autism Intersect</li> </ul>
<p><b>October 3, 2019</b></p>	<p>41</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pennsylvania Dependency Benchbook: Highlights from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition</li> <li>• Best Practices and Alternatives to Congregate Care</li> <li>• Congregate Care Youth Panel</li> <li>• Case Law Update</li> </ul>

PREVIOUS HEARING OFFICER EDUCATION SESSIONS

<b>2020</b>	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>No educational sessions were held due to the pandemic</i></li> </ul>
<b>June 3, 2021</b>	66	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Safety Legal Analysis</li> <li>• Kinship Care &amp; Child Placements with Emergency Caregivers</li> <li>• Drug Testing in Child Welfare</li> <li>• Case Law Update</li> </ul>
<b>October 7 &amp; 8, 2021</b>	32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Judicial Academy on Reasonable Efforts</li> </ul>
<b>June 2, 2022</b>	43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Intersect of Human Behavior &amp; the Law (Benchmark Resource Companion)</li> <li>• Kinship Care and ICPC</li> <li>• What does your CPCMS Dependency Data say?</li> <li>• Case Law Update</li> </ul>
<b>October 6, 2022</b>	43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autism and the Dependency Courts: Moving from Knowledge to Action</li> <li>• Motivational Interviewing for Judges and Hearing Officers</li> </ul>
<b>May 11, 2023</b>	44	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the Priority of Kinship Care</li> <li>• State Roundtable’s Priorities and Updates</li> <li>• Ethical Situations and Considerations</li> <li>• Case Law Update</li> </ul>
<b>October 12, 2023</b>	42	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trauma 101</li> <li>• Creating a Trauma-Informed and Responsive Court</li> <li>• Human Trafficking</li> <li>• Role of the Court in Child Sex Trafficking</li> </ul>
<b>July 2018 to April 2024</b>	54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pa.R.J.C.P. 1182 Distance Education Training</li> </ul>



# As of April 2024, there are 81 Dependency Juvenile Court Hearing Officers located in 39 out of the 60 judicial districts.





## Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Session on May 11, 2023

What is your overall evaluation of the training?	4.5 out of 5
How relevant was the information presented?	4.5 out of 5
<b><i>How satisfied were you with the following sessions:</i></b>	
Understanding the Priority of Kinship Care	4.3 out of 5
State Roundtable's Priorities and Updates	4.3 out of 5
Ethical Situations & Considerations	4.6 out of 5
Case Law Update	4.5 out of 5
<b><i>My current understanding and knowledge is:</i></b>	
Kinship Care (1 – Not at all 2 – Below Average 3 – Average 4 – Above Average)	3.6 out of 4

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

1. More proactive getting kin into the courtroom; check the hallway for additional family/kin.
2. Engage children more and ask them who is important in their lives.
3. Take steps to determine/establish legal father; and ask more questions about fathers.
4. More open to finding no reasonable efforts.

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

1. How to change ICPC to increase use of Kinship Care?
2. How to encourage older youth to attend hearings if they refuse?

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

1. Mental Health Issues
2. Older Youth and IL Services
3. Paternity

## Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Session on October 12, 2023

What is your overall evaluation of the training?	4.5 out of 5
How relevant was the information presented?	4.4 out of 5
<b><i>How satisfied were you with the following sessions:</i></b>	
JCHO Education Committee Panel	4.6 out of 5
Trauma 101	4.0 out of 5
Trauma Informed & Responsive Court	4.1 out of 5
Human Trafficking	4.3 out of 5
Role of the Court in Child Sex Trafficking	4.3 out of 5
Application to Practice: Family Feud	4.4 out of 5

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

1. Make court room experience less traumatic and speak to all parties.
2. Be more aware of signs for trauma & child sex trafficking during hearings
3. Take a closer look / scrutinize any case where the child has or threatened to run away.
4. Take topic of human trafficking back to the local Children's Roundtable.

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

1. Would a parent who knowingly permits their paramour to sexually abuse their child(ren) be considered a trafficker?
2. How to handle lack of resources available for services

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

1. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) & Healing Children from Trauma
2. Sexual Exploitation of Children
3. Dependent Youth Ages 18+