



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

News for Immediate Release

April 11, 2012

**PA Supreme Court to Co-Sponsor Family Group Decision-Making Conference
Court's Initiative Is Improving Lives of Dependent Children**

As part of a statewide initiative to improve the lives of dependent children, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania is co-sponsoring a two-day Family Group Decision-Making Conference for judges, county commissioners, attorneys and child welfare professionals.

Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Max Baer said, "The state's family group decision-making process is designed to engage the wider family group, including relatives, friends, community members, and others, in collectively making decisions to provide lifelong support for abused and neglected children."

Your coverage of the conference, held on April 12 and 13 at the Hershey Lodge and Convention Center; 325 University Drive; Hershey, PA, is invited. *(The conference schedule is enclosed.)*

Keynote speakers include Justice Baer; Dr. Felicia Haywood, Director of Student Affairs, Penn State Harrisburg, and a nationally certified and professionally licensed counselor; and George P. Hartwick III, Dauphin County Commissioner. Other conference participants include Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare Secretary Gary Alexander, PA Juvenile Court Judges' Commission Executive Director James Anderson; Deputy Secretary, Office of Children, Youth and Families Beverly Mackereth; and Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Court Office of Children and Families in the Courts Administrator Sandy Moore.

Since 2006 the Office of Children and Families in the Courts, along with the Department of Public Welfare and other partners, have safely reduced the number of dependent and delinquent children in temporary foster care homes by more than 7,000, or 33 percent. Placing these children into a permanent family setting greatly improves their chances to succeed and significantly reduces the cost of institutional care, saving Pennsylvania an estimated \$117 million annually.

"With enhanced judicial oversight and strength-based, family-led practices, our overriding goals are to keep children safely in their homes, return others to their homes, and when staying or returning home is not possible, find quickly the best alternative permanent home for every child," Justice Baer said.

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Pennsylvania 2012 Conference on Family Group Decision-Making
The Next Level: Building upon Our Success

Thursday, April 12, 2012

1:00 - 1:15 p.m., Welcome Address: Gary Alexander, Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare

1:15 -1:30 p.m., Opening Keynote Address: Honorable Max Baer, Justice, Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

1:30 - 2:45 p.m., The Family and Youth Experience: Moderator: Sandy Moore, Administrator, Office of Children and Families in the Courts
Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts

3:00 - 4:00 p.m., Facilitated County Team Discussion

6:00 - 8:30 p.m., Dinner Keynote Speaker: Dr. Felicia Haywood

Friday, April 13, 2012

8:30 - 9:00 a.m., Welcome Address: Beverly Mackereth; Deputy Secretary
Office of Children, Youth and Families, Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare

9:00 - 10:15 a.m., How to Talk with Families about Family Group Decision-Making
Moderator: James Anderson, Executive Director
Pennsylvania Juvenile Court Judges' Commission

10:30 - 11:30 p.m., Practice Application

12:30 - 1:45 p.m., Lunch Keynote Speaker: George P. Hartwick III
Dauphin County Commissioner

1:45 - 2:45 p.m., Accountability and the Shift in Practice to Engaging Families
Moderator: Beverly Mackereth, Deputy Secretary, Office of Children, Youth and Families,
Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare

3:00 - 4:00 p.m., Putting It All Together