



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

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Five Pennsylvania Counties Selected for Statewide Initiative Supporting Abused and Neglected Children

HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania’s Supreme Court today announced the selection of five new counties to participate in the fifth phase of the Pennsylvania State Roundtable’s Family Engagement Initiative.

The roundtable is a collaborative effort among state and national court and child welfare leaders. The focus of this initiative is to increase family involvement, reduce trauma to children and reduce the time children are separated from those who love and care about them.

The selected counties – Erie, Juniata, Potter, Warren and Luzerne – join 18 other counties for a total of 23 counties which have joined the initiative over the past six years.

“Challenging and encouraging our growing number of partners throughout the state continues to improve the way we serve families under court supervision. Working closely with counties who are implementing new family engagement strategies, we continue to make great strides in protecting and supporting healthy child development,” said Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Kevin M. Dougherty.

Through this initiative, counties receive specialized resources developed just for them as well as training from experts to enhance the way they serve abused or neglected children and their families.

With the new additions of Erie, Juniata, Potter, Warren and Luzerne, the initiative touches the lives of 53 percent of abused and neglected children currently supervised by Pennsylvania’s Dependency Courts.

“Identifying and involving extended family members and close friends in the lives of children is so important and many times requires the support of all local leaders within the selected counties,” said Sandy Moore, director of the Office of Children and Families in the Courts (OCFC). “Our goal is to reduce trauma by placing children, who through no fault of their own must be removed from their homes, with safe people that they know and love.”

As part of the competitive, statewide process, counties submitted a letter of interest, including signatures from the lead dependency judge, president judge, county commissioners, child welfare director and mental health director.

Factors considered in the selection process included:

- Strong administrative collaboration between the court and children welfare agencies
- Strong judicial and agency leadership
- Current family engagement practices
- Data reviews.

Final selections were made by representatives from OCFC, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services' Office of Children, Youth and Families and the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

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.

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