

Resources and References

Online Resources/Information Clearinghouses

There are a number of national-level policy and research organizations and government agencies that share a focus on child welfare issues and the role of the court system in the processing of child abuse and neglect cases. The websites of these organizations and agencies are excellent sources of information on numerous topics and provide the latest in commentary, research, best practice guidelines, innovative programs, and other initiatives in various jurisdictions. Many also highlight training and technical assistance opportunities. Overviews and links to some of the more prominent and comprehensive sites are provided below by clicking the blue, underlined text. Please use the electronic version of the Benchbook at the Office of Children and Families of the Court website: <https://ocfcpacourts.us>.

A. [ACEs Too High](#)

This news website highlights the latest headlines, research, and developments regarding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). It also provides research, practice, national initiatives, and the ACE Study resources. The site includes links to other trauma-informed sites, the principal investigator of the ACE study, Dr. Vince Felitti's presentations, and ACE score information and questionnaires.

B. [American Bar Association's \(ABA\) Center on Children and the Law](#)

The ABA Center on Children and the Law is a program of the Young Lawyers Division that aims to improve children's lives through advances in law, justice, knowledge, practice, and policy. Specific projects include:

- ABA Permanency Project
- Capacity Building Center for Courts
- Family Justice Initiative
- Quality Legal Representation
- Commission on Youth at Risk

The Center has established a [Legal Center for Foster Care & Education](#), which is a collaboration between Casey Family Programs and the Center in conjunction with the Education Law Center-PA and the Juvenile Law Center. It is supported by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, Raikes Foundation, Casey Family Programs, Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program, Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, and Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati. The site includes publications, such as the [Foster Care & Education 101 \(Blueprint for Change\) — Legal Center for Foster Care & Education](#), and a series of guidelines on special education issues and the role of the court.

The Center is also part of the [National Alliance for Parent Representation](#). This project provides training and technical assistance to jurisdictions seeking to pursue justice for parents and families through effective legal, legislative, and policy advocacy. It also includes information on the quality of legal representation for parents and resources to support practice and parents.

C. [Capacity Building Center for Courts \(CBCC\)](#)

The center is funded by the Children’s Bureau and is supported through the collaborative efforts of the American Bar Association (ABA), the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ), the National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC), Public Knowledge, and Westat. Its mission is to create integrated capacity-building plans that engage Court Improvement Programs (CIPs) in system improvement work, provide direct support to CIPs, and create learning opportunities and resources to elevate legal and judicial practice nationwide. The site contains information on several focus areas, including continuous quality improvement and the Indian Child Welfare Act.

D. [Casey Family Programs \(CFP\)](#)

Casey Family Programs (CFP) is the nation’s largest operating foundation entirely focused on foster care. The goal of the foundation is to safely reduce the number of children in foster care and improve the lives of those who remain in care through research and policy recommendations. The website includes a library of materials on foster care and child welfare issues and is an excellent resource for research and commentary on educational issues, kinship care, racial disproportionality, congregate care, and youth aging out of the foster care system, among other topics. [Resources - Casey Family Programs](#)

E. [ACEs — Dr. Nadine Burke Harris](#)

Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, MD, is the surgeon general of California and founder of the Center for Youth Wellness in San Francisco. She is a national expert on trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Dr. Harris has spoken of the importance of recognizing and treating trauma in children. The Center’s mission is to improve the health of children and adolescents exposed to adverse childhood experiences. The website has a section on ACEs & Toxic Stress that discusses the science behind ACEs and their effects on individuals' health.

Popular resources are:

- [TedTalk: How Childhood Trauma Effects Health Across a Lifetime](#)
- [The Deepest Well: Healing the Long-Term Effects of Childhood Adversity \(2018\)](#) by Nadine Burke Harris, M.D.
- [The Science of ACES and Toxic Stress Part 1](#)

F. [Child Welfare Information Gateway \(CWIG\)](#)

The CWIG website serves as an information clearinghouse on child welfare issues and is sponsored by the Children’s Bureau of the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. References are categorized into the following topic areas:

- Family Centered Practice
- Child Abuse and Neglect
- Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect
- Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect
- Supporting and Preserving Families
- Out-of-Home Care
- Achieving and Maintaining Permanency
- Adoption
- Management and Supervision
- Systemwide

G. [Courts Catalyzing Change: Achieving Equity and Fairness in Foster Care Initiative](#)

The Courts Catalyzing Change Initiative is directed by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges with funding from Casey Family Programs and support from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) of the U.S. Department of Justice. The purpose is to bring together judicial officers and other system experts to set a national agenda for court-based training, research, and reform initiatives to reduce the disproportionate representation and disparate treatment of children of color in the dependency court system. The webpage includes the [Right from the Start: The Courts Catalyzing Change Preliminary Protective Hearing Benchcard - NCJFCJ](#).

H. [Education Law Center \(ELC\)](#)

Since 1975, the Education Law Center of Pennsylvania (ELC) has worked to make good public education a reality for Pennsylvania’s most vulnerable children—poor children, children of color, children with disabilities, English language learners, children in foster homes and institutions, and others. The ELC’s website offers detailed, helpful information about education.

I. [Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University](#)

The mission of the Center on the Developing Child is to drive science-based innovation that achieves breakthrough outcomes for children facing adversity. Its belief is that advances in science provide a powerful source of new ideas focused

on the early years of life. Founded in 2006, the Center catalyzes local, national, and international innovation in policy and practice focused on children and families. The Center designs, tests, and implements ideas in collaboration with a broad network of research, practice, policy, and community leaders for maximum impact on lifelong learning, behavior, and both the physical and mental health of young children. The website features research, implications, and policy applications about many areas of child development. Most notable is the work they have done on Toxic Stress and Resilience. Some resources available on this website are:

- *The Science of Neglect: [How Child Neglect Harms Brain Development in Children](#)*
- *ACEs and Toxic Stress: Frequently Asked Questions: [What Are ACEs? And How Do They Relate to Toxic Stress?](#)*

J. [Juvenile Law Center \(JLC\)](#)

The Juvenile Law Center (JLC) is a public interest law firm for children in the United States, founded in 1975 and based in Philadelphia. The Center advocates for rights, dignity, equity, and opportunity for youth in the child welfare and justice systems. The Center authored the [Pennsylvania Judicial Deskbook, 4th Edition](#), published in 2004. Other publications of interest are available in the [Resources](#) section, which includes access to a resource library, toolkits, and guides.

K. [Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect](#)

The Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect is recognized as a world leader in child abuse treatment programs and has been at the forefront of the fight against child abuse. The Kempe Center is the organization that contains information from the [National Center on Family Group Decision Making \(FGDM\)](#) to promote and support family and community involvement and leadership in decision-making about children who need protection or care. The Center provides training, technical assistance, research, and resources to communities implementing FGDM, and its website has links to a series of policy briefs, FGDM FAQs, and articles on the history of FGDM and other related topics.

L. National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC)

The mission of the National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC) is to strengthen the delivery of legal services for children, enhance the quality of legal services, and improve courts and agencies that serve children. Publications available through the website include:

- *Child Welfare Law and Practice: Representing Children, Parents and State Agencies in Abuse, Neglect, and Dependency Cases, (The Red Book, 4th Edition) (Oct. 2023)*
- *Children’s Justice: How to Improve Legal Representation of Children in the Child Welfare System. Donald N. Duquette (2016)*

M. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) was established by Congress in 2000. It is administered under the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the UCLA-Duke University National Center for Child Traumatic Stress (NCCTS). The website provides resources for different types of trauma and for professionals in many roles who come into contact with people suffering from trauma. There is information about what trauma is, treatment and practices for trauma and trauma-informed care. In addition to written resources, the NCTSN also hosts online and in-person training. Some resources that might be of interest to the legal community include:

- [Trauma: What Child Welfare Attorneys Should Know | The National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)
- [Helping Traumatized Children: Tips for Judges | The National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)
- [NCTSN Bench Cards for the Trauma-Informed Judge | The National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)

N. National Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Association

While the National CASA website is primarily devoted to information for local CASA programs and volunteers, the Association recognizes that judges play a key role in developing new programs, sustaining existing programs, and expanding the network. The website provides a link to resources for judges. It can be accessed here: [Resources for Judges - National CASA/GAL Association for Children.](#)

The [Pennsylvania CASA Association](#) is a statewide non-profit organization that promotes public awareness of the CASA concept, helps local programs develop, and generally supports local programs in Pennsylvania.

O. [National Center for Juvenile Justice \(NCJJ\)](#)

The National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) is the nation's only non-profit research organization solely dedicated to the juvenile justice system. Founded in 1973 as the research division of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Judges, the Center serves as a resource for independent and original research directly or indirectly related to delinquency and child abuse and neglect.

The Center provides information and analysis on the nature, extent, and trends in juvenile crime and victimization in the United States; conducts evaluations of prevention and intervention programs; conducts assessments of case processing; and compiles and analyzes state laws.

P. [National Center for State Courts \(NCSC\)](#)

The National Center for State Courts (NCSC) provides an overview, FAQs, and links to articles and reports on dependency court issues through its Information and Resources division. Specific categories include:

- Dependency court reform
- Educational Success and Stability
- Family drug treatment courts
- Infants and toddlers
- Involving Children and Parents
- Judicial Guides Checklists and Tools
- Mediation and Family Group Conferencing
- Older Youth
- Performance measurement
- Racial and ethnic disproportionality
- Representation
- Safely Reducing the Number of Children in Foster Care
- Tribal Courts
- Well-Being
- Data exchange and IT systems

Q. [National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges \(NCJFCJ\)](#)

The website contains links to many of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges' (NCJFCJ) resources, including the widely referenced work on court practices in child abuse and neglect cases: [Enhanced Resource Guidelines: Improving Court Practice in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases \(2016\)](#).

NCJFCJ publishes *The Juvenile and Family Court Journal*, a quarterly compilation of articles on juvenile justice and family law topics. It has also conducted research and published reports and technical assistance briefs on other specific child welfare issues and programs.

R. [The National Institute for Permanent Family Connectedness \(NIPFC\)](#)

The mission of the National Institute for Permanent Family Connectedness (NIPFC) is to advance permanency for all children and youth, with Family Finding as a core strategy and a method that adds value to service systems. Every child has a family, and family members can be found when we try. Loneliness can be devastating, even dangerous, and is experienced by most children in out-of-home care. The single factor most closely associated with positive outcomes for children is meaningful, lifelong connections to family. The website includes training resources, articles, and video/audio podcasts about family finding topics.

S. [Office of Children & Families in the Courts \(OCFC\)](#)

The Office of Children and Families in the Court (OCFC) was created by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania to make more positive outcomes for children involved in child abuse, neglect, and dependency cases. The OCFC's work is guided by four principles: protect children, promote strong families, promote child well-being, and provide timely permanency. The website contains a link to a resource center for judges and other legal professionals, which includes information regarding the Children's Roundtable Initiative, Family Engagement Initiative, three-month court reviews, and expedited children's fast-track appeals. Additionally, the website provides specific information for children/youth, parents, family and community members, and human service professionals. The website also contains valuable information on all of the State Roundtable Workgroups and links to the reports and resources developed by the workgroups.

The Pennsylvania Benchbook Resource Companion- 2nd Edition can also be accessed on the website. [Benchbook Resource Companion – Office of Children & Families in the Courts – Office of Children & Families in the Courts](#).

T. [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities. The website includes resources on recovery and treatment, issues, conditions, and disorders; substances; and professional and research topics.

U. The Unified Judicial System of Pennsylvania (UJS)

The website for the Unified Judicial System (UJS) of Pennsylvania is a rich resource that hosts the sites for both the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (Judicial Administration) and the Office of Children and Families in the Courts (Judicial Administration/Operations). Supreme Court opinions and Superior Court opinions, juvenile rules committee, dependency court forms, and data dashboard information can also be found.

V. Making It Permanent, Reasonable Efforts to Finalize Permanency for Foster Children, by Cecilia Fiermonte and Jennifer L. Renne

This resource is cited in Chapter 12 of the Benchbook and is made available via OCFC website for reference.