



2025 State Roundtable Report: Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education



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

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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 21 educational sessions for dependency hearing officers, including the sessions held in 2024, which are 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 2025, there are 81 dependency juvenile court hearing officers 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.

Rules of Juvenile Court Procedure 1182 Webpage

In March 2025, the Office of Children and Families in the Courts (OCFC) added a new Juvenile Court Procedure Rule 1182 webpage to its website: www.ocfcpacourts.us/childrens-roundtable-initiative/state-roundtable-workgroupscommittees/hearing-officers/pennsylvania-juvenile-court-procedure-rule-1182-qualifications-of-juvenile-court-hearing-officers/ The recently updated Rule 1182 Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Certification Course for prospective dependency hearing officers is now available on the Rule 1182 webpage rather than that of the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission (JCJC). On the Rule 1182 webpage, as well as the OCFC website homepage, www.ocfcpacourts.us/, judges and court administrators can request prospective hearing officers be given access to the dependency certification course by using the following link: www.surveymonkey.com/r/W2M52QY.

The Rule 1182 webpage also includes the following:

1. A link to Pa.R.J.C.P. 1182;
2. A historical timeline of Rule 1182;
3. A link to the State Roundtable's Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee webpage. This webpage provides information on the Committee and continuing education opportunities for dependency hearing officers to meet the requirements of Rule 1182(B); and
4. A sample affidavit for hearing officers to verify compliance with Rule 1182(C), which was provided by the Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee.

On March 13, 2025, OCFC emailed lead dependency judges to notify them of the Rule 1182 webpage and the new way to request prospective hearing officers have access to the Dependency Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Certification online course. OCFC also provided an update on the new webpage at the Spring 2025 Leadership Roundtable meetings.

The Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee and OCFC want to express their gratitude to JCJC for their willingness to host the Dependency Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Certification Course initially. The course was accessed through the JCJC Event Management System (JEMs) from July 30, 2018, through February 28, 2025. During this timeframe, 66 Dependency Juvenile Court Hearing Officers completed the Rule 1182 Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Certification Course.

Progress and Update on Approved 2024 State Roundtable Recommendations

The Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee assisted the Office of Children and Families in the Courts with the education sessions held on May 8, 2024, May 9, 2024, and October 10, 2024. Progress made on the 2024 SRT recommendations 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.

In April 2024, there were 81 dependency hearing officers in Pennsylvania. Over half (51%) of the hearing officers completed the initial mandatory Rule 1182 training almost seven years ago on June 6, 2017. In addition, 28% of the hearing officers had completed the Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Certification online course anywhere from 2 to 6 years ago.

81 Dependency Hearing Officers in Pennsylvania (April 2024)		
Number of JCHO	Percentage of JCHO	Met Requirement of Rule 1182(A)(3)
41	51%	Mandatory 1182 Course on June 6, 2017
23	28%	1182 Online Course through April 2022
17	21%	1182 Online Course May 2022 thru April 2024

Given this information, at the Spring 2024 Hearing Officer Education Session, the Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee introduced a new training series, “Back to Basics.” Although the Committee strives to provide training opportunities on new topics to keep the hearing officers updated on dependency law, policy, or related social science research, the Committee also believes it is essential to review the fundamental requirements. In this ongoing training series, the Committee will revisit each chapter of the Rule 1182 Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Certification Course at future sessions.

Spring 2024 Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Sessions:

On May 8, 2024, and May 9, 2024, education sessions were held virtually via Webex. There were 53 hearing officers who attended each session. The sessions were a half-day and included the following topics:

DAY 1

- Addressing Adolescent Youth Mental Health Concerns of Dependent Youth through Self-Care

- Back to Basics: The Charge of the Dependency System
- State Roundtable's Priorities and Updates
- Back to Basics: Analyzing Child Safety

DAY 2

- A Judicial Focus on Timely Permanency
- Ethical Situations & Considerations
- Back to Basics: Role of Juvenile Court Hearing Officer

The following faculty dedicated their time, knowledge, and passion to the topics of the sessions:

- **Honorable Jennifer L. Rogers**, Court of Common Pleas of Luzerne County
- **Honorable Linda R. Cordaro**, Court of Common Pleas of Fayette County
- **Kate Cramer Lawrence, Esquire**, Hearing Officer, Court of Common Pleas of Cumberland County
- **Ally Sholley, Esquire**, Guardian ad Litem, Court of Common Pleas of Snyder and Union Counties
- **Jennifer Napp Evans, Ph. D.**, Administrator, Snyder County Social Services for Children & Youth
- **Christy Stanek, MSW**, Deputy Director, Office of Children and Families in the Courts
- **Jennifer A. Eichenlaub, MSW, MBA**, Judicial Analyst, Office of Children and Families in the Courts
- **Cori Dunn, Esquire**, Judicial Analyst, Office of Children and Families in the Courts
- **Holly Innamorato, MSW**, Judicial Analyst, Office of Children and Families in the Courts
- **Diane Litzinger**, Judicial Analyst, Office of Children and Families in the Courts

Participation evaluation results showed an overall rating of 4.3/5.0 on Day 1 and 4.4/5.0 on Day 2, with overall relevancy of 4.4/5.0 on Day 1 and 4.5/5.0 on Day 2. A complete overview of the evaluation can be found in ***APPENDIX III***.

Fall 2024 Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Session:

At the 2023 State Roundtable meeting, a Mental Health Workgroup was commissioned to examine the impact of mental health on the dependency system. Realizing that every jurisdiction is impacted by mental health in the dependency system, the Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee decided to dedicate the entire education session to addressing the State Roundtable's newest priority.

On October 10, 2024, an education session was held at the Best Western Premier, the Central Hotel & Conference Center. There were 39 hearing officers who attended this session. The session was a full day and included the following topics:

- A Judicial Understanding of Pennsylvania's Mental Health System
- Case Law Update & Mental Health Case Law
- JCHO Education Committee Panel on Mental Health
- Ethical Situations on Mental Health & Considerations

The following faculty dedicated their time, knowledge, and passion to the topics of the session:

- **Laura Anne DeRiggi, LSW, MSW**, Senior Director Clinical Consultation, Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health/Intellectual Disability Services (DBHIDS), Community Behavioral Health (CBH) and Department of Human Services (DHS)
- **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
- **Theresa Loder, Esq.**, Hearing Officer, Court of Common Pleas of Lehigh County
- **Jalaine Stokes, Esq.**, Hearing Officer, Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia County
- **Tiffany York, Esq.**, Hearing Officer, Court of Common Pleas of Beaver County

Participation evaluation results showed an overall rating of 4.6/5.0 and an overall relevancy of 4.6/5.0. 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 training for Juvenile Court Hearing Officers, with an annual training during the year of the Chief Justice Max Baer Children's Summit, and semi-annual training in the alternate year, with permission to provide these trainings anytime throughout the year.**

PREVIOUS HEARING OFFICER EDUCATION SESSIONS

DATES OF EDUCATION SESSIONS	# OF JCHO ATTENDED	TOPICS
November 9, 2011	56	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pennsylvania Dependency Benchbook ● Courtroom Management ● Ethical Considerations for the Role of Hearing Officers ● Engaging Families in the Courtroom ● Practice Tips by each Hearing Type
September 3, 2013	35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Legal Safety Analysis ● Act 55, Family Finding ● Safety Analysis of Family Finding in Dependency Proceedings
September 3, 2014	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Grief, Loss, and Trauma ● Using Kinship to Reduce Grief, Loss, and Trauma ● De-Escalation in the Workplace ● Case Law Update
April 22, 2015	37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Achieving Permanency: Compliance versus Progress ● A Broad View: Hearing Officer Practices Across the State ● Case Law Update
September 9, 2015	37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Serving Older Youth ● A Broad View: Hearing Officer Practices Across the State ● Motivational Interviewing ● Standards of Practice in Pennsylvania's Child Dependency System ● Case Law Update
April 26, 2016	22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) ● Act 55 Family Finding: Leading from the Bench ● Case Law Update
September 14, 2016	45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Child Welfare 101 ● Rules of Evidence in Dependency Proceedings ● CPCMS and Court Observations

PREVIOUS HEARING OFFICER EDUCATION SESSIONS

September 14, 2016 (continued)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truancy: A Call to Action • Understanding Age and Developmentally Appropriate Activities, Prudent Parenting, and APPLA • Case Law Update
June 6, 2017	69	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory Pa.R.J.C.P. 1182 Training
October 4, 2017	28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking with and Engaging Children in the Courtroom • Engagement Strategies in the Courtroom • Truancy and Educational Success: Recent Legislative Changes • Ethical Situations and Considerations in Dependency • Case Law Update
April 6, 2018	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road Map to Permanency • The Opioid Crisis in Pennsylvania • Drug and Alcohol Screening, Assessments & Level of Care • Medication Assisted Treatment & Recovery • Ethical Situations and Considerations in Dependency
October 4, 2018	45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health Issues in Dependency Court: Bridging the Medico-legal Information Gap • I Do Not Qualify for Homebound Instruction, but I Refuse to Go To School- Help Me! • Family First Prevention Services Act: What Dependency Courts Can Stop Doing • Ethical Situations and Considerations in Dependency • Case Law Update
June 6, 2019	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable Efforts: What are they? What consequences do they hold? What does research, case law and data tell us? • What is Autism Spectrum Disorder? • When Dependency Court and Autism Intersect
October 3, 2019	41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pennsylvania Dependency Benchbook: Highlights from the 3rd Edition • Best Practices and Alternatives to Congregate Care • Congregate Care Youth Panel • Case Law Update

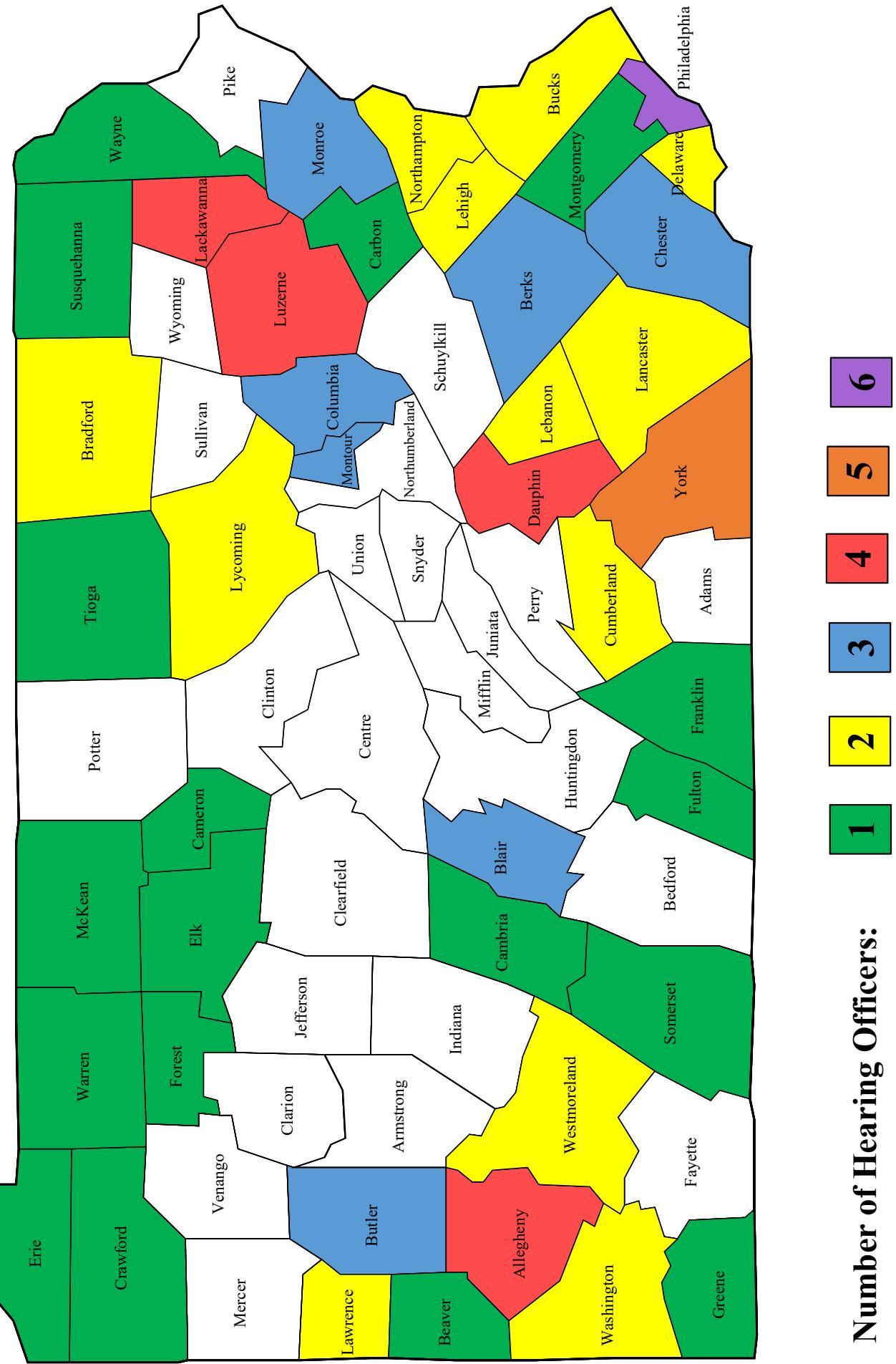
PREVIOUS HEARING OFFICER EDUCATION SESSIONS

2020	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No educational sessions were held due to the pandemic
June 3, 2021	66	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Safety Legal Analysis • Kinship Care & Child Placements with Emergency Caregivers • Drug Testing in Child Welfare • Case Law Update
October 7 & 8, 2021	32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judicial Academy on Reasonable Efforts
June 2, 2022	43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Intersect of Human Behavior & the Law (Benchbook Resource Companion) • Kinship Care and ICPC • What does your CPC/MS Dependency Data say? • Case Law Update
October 6, 2022	43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autism and the Dependency Courts: Moving from Knowledge to Action • Motivational Interviewing for Judges and Hearing Officers
May 11, 2023	44	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the Priority of Kinship Care • State Roundtable's Priorities and Updates • Ethical Situations & Considerations • Case Law Update
October 12, 2023	42	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trauma 101 • Creating a Trauma-Informed and Responsive Court • Human Trafficking • Role of the Court in Child Sex Trafficking • JCHO Education Committee Panel
May 8, 2024	54	<p>Day 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing Adolescent Youth Mental Health Concerns of Dependent Youth through Self-Care • Back to Basics: Charge of the Dependency System • State Roundtable's Priorities and Updates • Back to Basics: Analyzing Child Safety

PREVIOUS HEARING OFFICER EDUCATION SESSIONS

May 9, 2024	53	Day 2
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Judicial Focus on Timely Permanency • Ethical Situations & Considerations • Back to Basics: Role of Juvenile Court Hearing Officer
October 10, 2024	39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Judicial Understanding of Pennsylvania's Mental Health System • Case Law Update & Mental Health Case Law • JCHO Education Committee Panel • Ethical Situations & Considerations
July 2018 to March 2025	66	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pa.R.J.C.P. 1182 Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Certification Online Course

As of April 2025, there are 81 Dependency Juvenile Court Hearing Officers located in 39 out of the 60 judicial districts.



Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Sessions on May 8 & 9, 2024

DAY 1: May 8, 2024	
What is your overall evaluation of the training?	4.3 out of 5
How relevant was the information presented?	4.4 out of 5
<i>How satisfied were you with the following sessions:</i>	
Addressing Adolescent Youth Mental Health Concerns of Dependent Youth through Self-Care	4.1 out of 5
Back to Basics: Charge of the Dependency System & State Roundtable's Priorities and Updates	4.1 out of 5
Back to Basics: Analyzing Child Safety	4.4 out of 5
DAY 2: May 9, 2024	
What is your overall evaluation of the training?	4.4 out of 5
How relevant was the information presented?	4.5 out of 5
<i>How satisfied were you with the following sessions:</i>	
A Judicial Focus on Timely Permanency	4.2 out of 5
Ethical Situations & Considerations	4.5 out of 5
Back to Basics: Role of Juvenile Court Hearing Officer	4.3 out of 5

Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Session on October 10, 2024

What is your overall evaluation of the training?	4.6 out of 5
How relevant was the information presented?	4.6 out of 5
<i>How satisfied were you with the following sessions:</i>	
A Judicial Understanding of PA's Mental Health System	4.5 out of 5
Case Law Update & Mental Health Case Law	4.9 out of 5
JCHO Education Committee Panel	4.7 out of 5
Ethical Situations & Considerations	4.8 out of 5

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

1. Ask more specific questions related to mental health.
2. When applicable, recommend CYS request Complex Case Reviews.
3. Engage service providers during review hearings.
4. Hold more frequent hearings when there is a lack of mental health services.

What questions do you still have about the material presented?

1. More information on Act 65 of 2020: Consent to Mental Health Treatment for Minors

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

1. Medical Marijuana
2. Educational Success
3. Substance Use Disorder