

Dependency Benchbook

4th Edition Released

By **Christy Stanek**, Deputy Director Office of Children and Families in the Courts

In February, the 4th edition of the Dependency Benchbook was released and presented to dependency judges at the Pennsylvania Conference of State Trial Judges (PCSTJ) mid-annual meeting.

Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice **Kevin M. Dougherty**, an original Benchbook Committee member who helped create the 1st edition, opened the session.

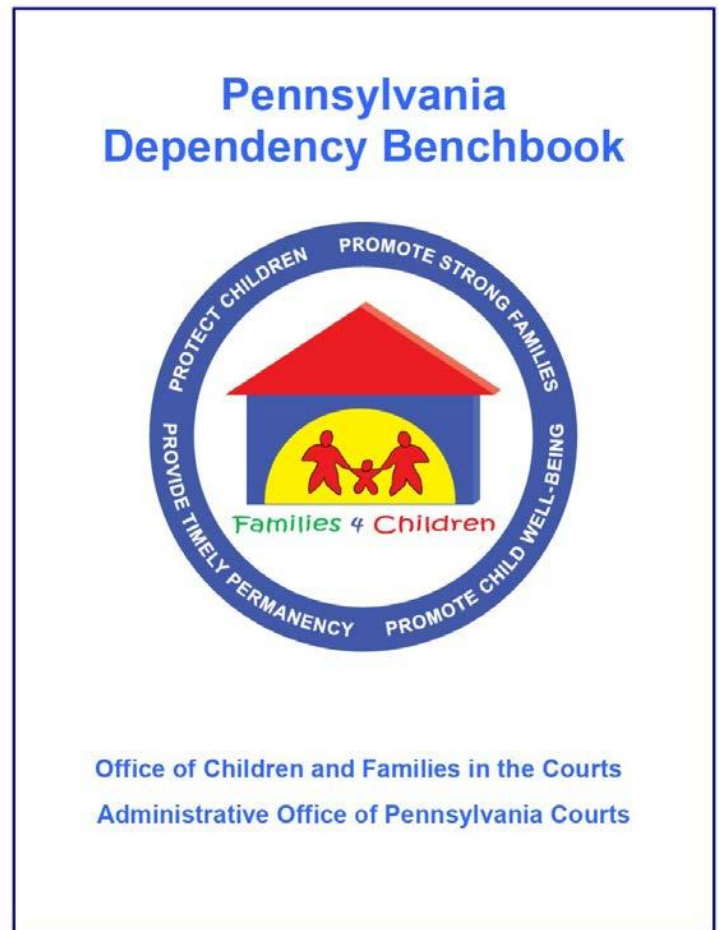
“The Dependency Benchbook is designed to help new and experienced judges understand the intricacies of dependency proceedings and to assist judges in their efforts to provide timely permanency, promote strong families, protect children and promote child well-being,” Justice Dougherty said.

Members of the Benchbook Committee, including the Committee Chairperson – Clinton County President Judge **Craig P. Miller**, Luzerne County Judge **Jennifer L. Rogers**, Beaver County Judge **Mitchell P. Shahn** and Berks County Judge **Tina M. Boyd** joined the PCSTJ presentation.

New information presented addressed:

- Educational success and truancy
- Best practices in family finding and Family Group Decision-Making
- Best practices in child welfare and safety
- Best practices related to courtroom observations
- New bench cards for:
 - Autism
 - CPCMS Reports
 - Engaging Children
 - Removal Considerations
 - Stages of Change in the Recovery Process

The Benchbook Committee is comprised of Pennsylvania trial court judges who oversee dependency proceedings. President Judge Miller acknowledged the work and dedication of his fellow jurists on the Benchbook Committee, commending the many hours they committed to updating the



Benchbook while maintaining their daily judicial responsibilities.

In addition, Judge Miller announced the dedication of the Dependency Benchbook 4th edition to the late Hon. **Michael H. Sholley**, Court of Common Pleas of Snyder/Union Counties, who was a Benchbook Committee member since 2019.

Judge Miller expressed the Committee’s sincere appreciation, saying, “Judge Sholley was committed to creating an excellent Benchbook. He spent many hours working on revisions and creating new content for this edition before his passing in September 2024. We are grateful for his work and his friendship. He is missed.”

more information

For an online copy of the Dependency Benchbook, you can visit www.ocfcpcacourts.us.