



2026 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

Keith Boggess, Esquire
Juvenile Court Hearing Officer
Chester County

Ann Marie Cucinotta, Esquire
Juvenile Court Hearing Officer
Berks County

Kim Gillen, Esquire
Juvenile Court Hearing Officer
Carbon County

Kate Cramer Lawrence, Esquire
Juvenile Court Hearing Officer
Cumberland County

Jalaine Stokes, Esquire
Juvenile Court Hearing Officer
Philadelphia County

Todd W. Weitzmann, Esquire
Juvenile Court Hearing Officer
Monroe County

Tiffany York, Esquire
Juvenile Court Hearing Officer
Beaver County

Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts/ Office of Children & Families in the Courts

Jennifer A. Eichenlaub, MSW, MBA
Judicial Program Analyst

Cori Dunn, Esquire
Judicial Program Analyst

Sandra Moore, MSW
Director

Elke Moyer
Administrative Associate/Graphic Designer

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 this SRT goal, the Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee was convened and tasked with developing 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 being offered bi-annually. In addition, there was a dramatic increase in the number of 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, was appointed Chairperson of the Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee. Under Judge Rogers' leadership, the educational sessions are held on a consistent schedule to provide hearing officers with as much advanced notice as possible.

Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee Update

At the 2025 State Roundtable meeting, the Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee recommended ongoing development of training for Juvenile Court Hearing Officers, with annual training during the year of the Chief Justice Max Baer Children's Summit and semi-annual training in the alternate year. Members of the State Roundtable unanimously approved of this recommendation. Given the State Roundtable's approval, at the Fall 2025 Leadership Roundtables, judges were encouraged to invite their primary hearing officers to be part of their county team at the 2026 Chief Justice Max Baer Children's Summit. Judges were reminded that, except for travel expenses, the Office of Children and Families in the Courts would cover the costs for primary hearing officers to attend the Children's Summit, provided they attend the entire conference. In addition, the judges were encouraged to invite their hearing officers to attend their local Children's Roundtable meetings and Leadership Roundtables to strengthen Pennsylvania's Children's Roundtable Initiative.

At the Fall 2025 Leadership Roundtables, the Juvenile Court Education Committee asked judges for their input on the following two questions via Slido:

1. What has prevented Juvenile Court Hearing Officers (JCHO) in your county from attending the Children’s Summit? (check all that apply)	
Responses from 22 judges with JCHOs:	
73%	JCHOs in my county attend the Children’s Summit
27%	Limitations of the Summit team size
14%	JCHOs are providing coverage for dependency hearings during the Summit
0%	Compensation challenges
0%	Other

In reviewing the past two Children's Summits prior to the Fall 2025 LRT meeting, attendance by hearing officers correlates with judges' responses, indicating that around 73% of judges invite their hearing officers to attend.

JCHOs’ Attendance at Chief Justice Max Baer Children’s Summit				
Year of Summit	# of JCHO Attended	# of Judicial Districts with JCHOs at Summit	# of Judicial Districts with JCHOs in County Team	% of Judicial Districts with JCHOs in County Team
2022	26	30	20	67%
2024	25	31	22	71%
2026	33	30	23	77%
<i>Note: Some judicial districts had more than one JCHO on their county team.</i>				

For this year’s Children’s Summit, there was a 32% increase in the number of hearing officers in attendance and a 6% increase in the percentage of judicial districts with hearing officers having them as part of their county team compared to the previous Summit.

2. What strategies have you found effective in providing information and updates to your Juvenile Court Hearing Officer (JCHO) from Local Children’s Roundtable, Leadership Roundtable, and the Children’s Summit? (check all that apply)	
Responses from 24 judges with JCHOs:	
75%	Invite the JCHOs to attend the Local Children’s Roundtable meetings
58%	Invite the JCHOs to attend the Leadership Roundtable meetings
79%	Invite the JCHOs to be part of the Children’s Summit county team

38%	Meet with the JCHOs to provide information and updates on meetings they don't attend
38%	Email/call JCHOs to provide information and updates on meetings they don't attend
17%	Have a designee provide information and updates to the JCHOs on the meetings they don't attend
25%	Need to be more mindful of providing information and updates to the JCHOs on the meetings they don't attend

In reviewing hearing officers' presence at Leadership Roundtable (LRT) meetings since 2023, the highest attendance was 8 hearing officers and 6 judicial districts. During this timeframe, 15 judicial districts (38% to 43%) had a hearing officer attend at least 1 out of the 7 LRT meetings. Three of these judicial districts had their hearing officer present at 57% of the LRT meetings: Beaver, Bradford, and Washington. Cumberland was the only judicial district to have their hearing officer attend every LRT meeting.

LRTs	Spring		Fall	
Year	# of JCHOs	# of Judicial Districts with JCHOs Present	# of JCHOs	# of Judicial Districts with JCHOs Present
2023	6	6	3	3
2024	6	6	4	4
2025	7	6	8	5
2026	7	6		

Please note that these numbers do not account for the possibility that judges may have invited their hearing officers to the LRT meeting, but they were unable to attend due to professional or personal circumstances. In addition, for some judicial districts, the hearing officers cannot attend as they provide coverage for dependency matters while the judge is attending the LRT meeting. Regardless of these factors, attendance by hearing officers at LRT meetings remains low. Therefore, it is essential for judges to relay information, updates, and best practices from the LRT meetings to their hearing officers. To further support hearing officers in these communication efforts, the JCHO Education Committee will continue to provide SRT/LRT updates and highlights during the education sessions.

Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Sessions

Since its convening, the Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee has organized or assisted in developing 23 educational sessions for dependency hearing officers, including the sessions held in 2025, 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 2026, there are 81 dependency juvenile court hearing officers located in 38 of the 60 (63%) judicial districts in Pennsylvania. See *APPENDIX II* for the current number of hearing officers presiding over dependency matters in each judicial district.

Progress and Update on Approved 2025 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, 2025, and October 9, 2025. Progress made on the 2025 SRT recommendations is presented in further detail throughout this section of the report.

- 1. Ongoing development of training for Juvenile Court Hearing Officers, with 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.**

Spring 2025 Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Sessions:

On May 8, 2025, an education session was held at the Best Western Premier, the Central Hotel & Conference Center. There were 50 hearing officers who attended this session. The session was a full day and included the following topics:

- Understanding Medical Marijuana in Pennsylvania
- Medical Marijuana and Emerging Cannabinoids: Considerations from the Single County Authority
- Narcan: Overdose Prevention in the Courtroom
- 4th Edition of the Pennsylvania Dependency Benchbook
- From High-Functioning to Non-Functioning: Addressing Mental Health and Substance Misuse in the Legal Profession

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

- **Latrisha Bentch, Product Compliance and Research Division Manager**, Bureau of Medical Marijuana, PA Department of Health
- **Jay Hricak, Product Compliance Specialist**, Bureau of Medical Marijuana, PA Department of Health
- **James Eagler, CRS, Administrator**, Franklin/Fulton Drug & Alcohol | Single County Authority
- **Katelyn Becker, MSW, Prevention Specialist**, Franklin/Fulton Drug & Alcohol | Single County Authority
- **Rachael Wydra, RN, BSN, CHN, Behavioral Health Nurse Consultant**, PA Department of Health

- **Honorable Ryan M. Tira**, Court of Common Pleas of Lycoming County
- **Honorable Jennifer L. Rogers**, Court of Common Pleas of Luzerne County
- **Jennifer L. Doyle, Judicial Analyst**, Office of Children & Families in the Courts
- **Cori S. Dunn, Esq., Judicial Analyst**, Office of Children & Families in the Courts
- **Michael F. Yagercik, Esq., Education and Outreach**, Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers of PA, Inc.

The participation evaluation results showed an overall rating of 4.5/5.0 and an overall relevance rating of 4.4/5.0. A complete overview of the evaluation is available in ***APPENDIX III***.

Fall 2025 Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Session:

On October 9, 2025, an education session was held at the Best Western Premier, the Central Hotel & Conference Center. There were 45 hearing officers who attended this session. The session was a full day and included the following topics:

- State Roundtable Mental Health Workgroup: Recommendations and Tools Overview
- Overview of Psychotropic Prescribing for Adolescents
- Case Law Update & Older Youth Case Law
- The Intersection between the Juvenile Act and Act 65: Understanding Consent of an Adolescent to Mental Health Treatment
- Meeting the Educational Needs of Older Youth: How Hearing Officers Can Make a Difference
- Ethical Situations and Considerations

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

- **Christy Stanek, MSW**, Deputy Director, Office of Children and Families in the Courts
- **Diane Litzinger**, Judicial Analyst, Office of Children and Families in the Courts
- **Christopher J. Squillaro, DO**, Senior Medical Director, Magellan Behavioral Health of Pennsylvania
- **Kate Cramer Lawrence, Esquire**, Hearing Officer, Court of Common Pleas of Cumberland County
- **Honorable Jennifer L. Rogers**, Court of Common Pleas of Luzerne County
- **Maria Gibbons, Esquire**, Hearing Officer, Court of Common Pleas of Montgomery County
- **Maura McInerney, Esquire**, Legal Director, Education Law Center

Participation evaluation results showed an overall rating of 4.6/5.0 and an overall relevance rating of 4.7/5.0. A complete overview of the evaluation is available in ***APPENDIX IV***.

The Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Committee will continue with the ongoing development of training for Juvenile Court Hearing Officers to meet the requirements of Pa.R.J.C.P 1182(B), with annual training during the year of the Chief Justice Max Baer Children's Summit and semi-annual training in the alternate year.

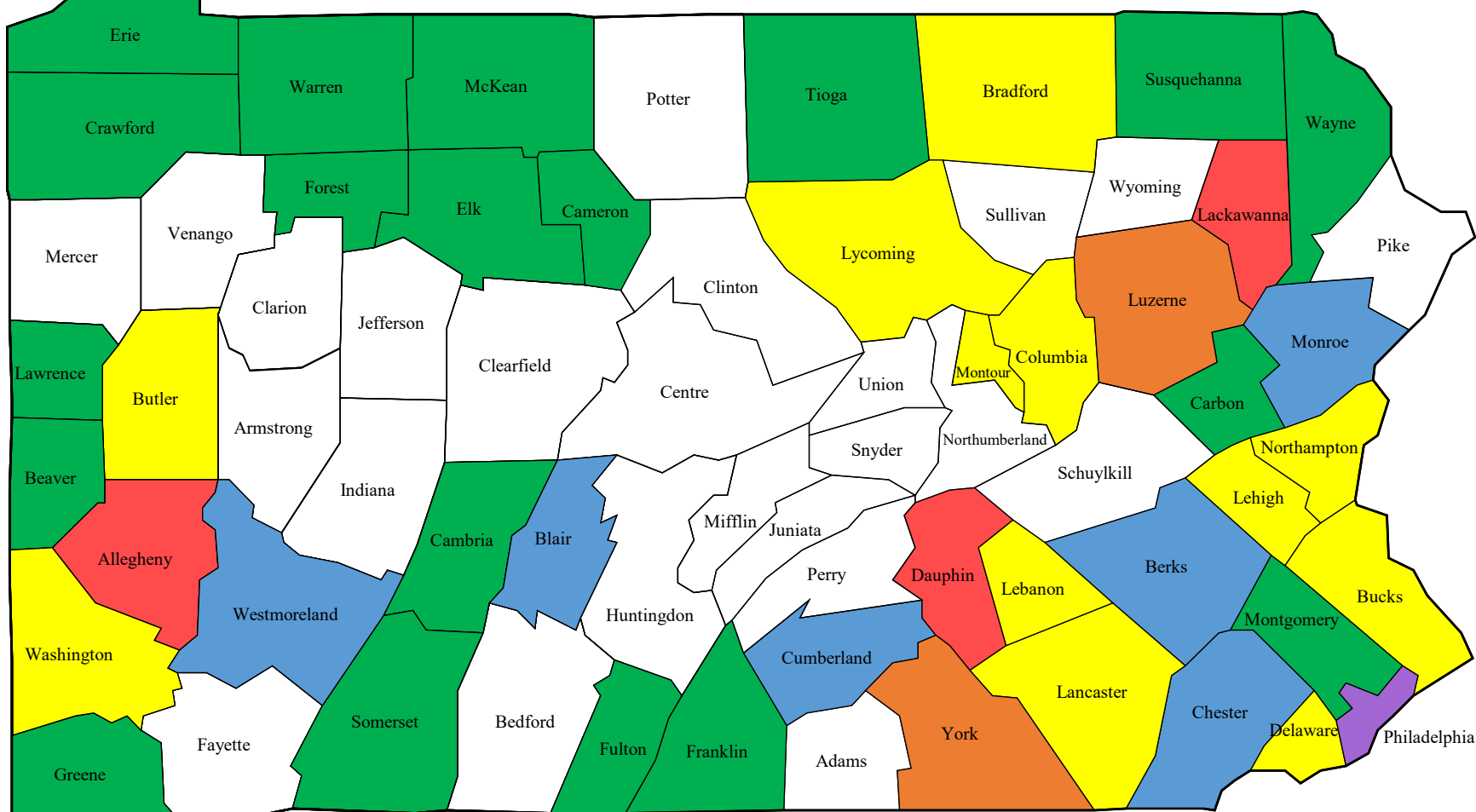
DATES OF EDUCATION SESSIONS	# OF JCHO ATTENDED	TOPICS
November 9, 2011	56	• Pennsylvania Dependency Benchbook • Courtroom Management • Ethical Considerations for the Role of Hearing Officers • Engaging Families in the Courtroom • Practice Tips by each Hearing Type
September 3, 2013	35	• Legal Safety Analysis • Act 55, Family Finding • Safety Analysis of Family Finding in Dependency Proceedings
September 3, 2014	50	• Grief, Loss, and Trauma • Using Kinship to Reduce Grief, Loss, and Trauma • De-Escalation in the Workplace • Case Law Update
April 22, 2015	37	• Achieving Permanency: Compliance versus Progress • A Broad View: Hearing Officer Practices Across the State • Case Law Update
September 9, 2015	37	• 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	• Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) • Act 55 Family Finding: Leading from the Bench • Case Law Update
September 14, 2016	45	• Child Welfare 101 • Rules of Evidence in Dependency Proceedings • CPCMS and Court Observations

September 14, 2016 <i>(continued)</i>		• Truancy: A Call to Action • Understanding Age and Developmentally Appropriate Activities, Prudent Parenting, and APPLA • Case Law Update
June 6, 2017	69	• Mandatory Pa.R.J.C.P. 1182 Training
October 4, 2017	28	• 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	• 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	• 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	• 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	• Pennsylvania Dependency Benchbook: Highlights from the 3rd Edition • Best Practices and Alternatives to Congregate Care • Congregate Care Youth Panel • Case Law Update

2020	n/a	• <i>No educational sessions were held due to the pandemic</i>
June 3, 2021	66	• Child Safety Legal Analysis • Kinship Care & Child Placements with Emergency Caregivers • Drug Testing in Child Welfare • Case Law Update
October 7 & 8, 2021	32	• Judicial Academy on Reasonable Efforts
June 2, 2022	43	• The Intersect of Human Behavior & the Law (Benchbook Resource Companion) • Kinship Care and ICPC • What does your CPCMS Dependency Data say? • Case Law Update
October 6, 2022	43	• Autism and the Dependency Courts: Moving from Knowledge to Action • Motivational Interviewing for Judges and Hearing Officers
May 11, 2023	44	• Understanding the Priority of Kinship Care • State Roundtable's Priorities and Updates • Ethical Situations & Considerations • Case Law Update
October 12, 2023	42	• 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	Day 1 • 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

May 9, 2024	53	Day 2 • A Judicial Focus on Timely Permanency • Ethical Situations & Considerations • Back to Basics: Role of Juvenile Court Hearing Officer
October 10, 2024	39	• A Judicial Understanding of Pennsylvania's Mental Health System • Case Law Update & Mental Health Case Law • JCHO Education Committee Panel • Ethical Situations & Considerations
May 8, 2025	50	• Understanding Medical Marijuana in Pennsylvania • Medical Marijuana and Emerging Cannabinoids: Considerations from the Single County Authority • Narcan: Overdose Prevention in the Courtroom • 4th Edition of the Pennsylvania Dependency Benchbook • From High-Functioning to Non-Functioning: Addressing Mental Health and Substance Misuse in the Legal Profession
October 9, 2025	45	• State Roundtable Mental Health Workgroup: Recommendations and Tools Overview • Overview of Psychotropic Prescribing for Adolescents • Case Law Update & Older Youth Case Law • The Intersection between the Juvenile Act and Act 65: Understanding Consent of an Adolescent to Mental Health Treatment • Meeting the Educational Needs of Older Youth: How Hearing Officers Can Make a Difference • Ethical Situations and Considerations
July 2018 to April 2026	72	• Pa.R.J.C.P. 1182 Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Certification Online Course

As of April 2026, there are 81 Dependency Juvenile Court Hearing Officers located in 38 out of the 60 judicial districts.



Number of Hearing Officers:



Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Session on May 8, 2025

What is your overall evaluation of the training?	4.5 out of 5
How relevant was the information presented?	4.4 out of 5
<i>How satisfied were you with the following sessions:</i>	
Understanding Medical Marijuana in Pennsylvania	4.4 out of 5
Medical Marijuana and Emerging Cannabinoids: Considerations from the Single County Authority	4.2 out of 5
Narcan: Overdose Prevention in the Courtroom	4.6 out of 5
4 th Edition of the Pennsylvania Dependency Benchbook	4.5 out of 5
From High-Functioning to Non-Functioning: Addressing Mental Health and Substance Misuse in the Legal Profession	4.6 out of 5

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

1. Ask many more follow-up questions of children, parents, and attorneys
2. Have NARCAN available in the courtroom

What questions do you still have about the material presented?

1. What is the difference between “dependence” and “addiction” to marijuana or other prescribed medication-assisted treatment?

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

1. Older Youth Mental Health
2. Truancy

Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Education Session on October 9, 2025

What is your overall evaluation of the training?	4.6 out of 5.0
How relevant was the information presented?	4.7 out of 5.0
<i>How satisfied were you with the following sessions:</i>	
State Roundtable Mental Health Workgroup: Recommendations and Tools Overview	4.3 out of 5.0
Overview of Psychotropic Prescribing for Adolescents	4.8 out of 5.0
Case Law Update & Older Youth Case Law	4.9 out of 5.0
The Intersection between the Juvenile Act and Act 65: Understanding Consent of an Adolescent to Mental Health Treatment	4.6 out of 5.0
Meeting the Educational Needs of Older Youth: How Hearing Officers Can Make a Difference	4.5 out of 5.0
Ethical Situations & Considerations	4.7 out of 5.0

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

1. Correct misinformation regarding compliance with mental health treatment
2. Review children's medications listed in the Child Permanency Plan

What questions do you still have about the material presented?

1. How to deal with delays in getting mental health evaluations/treatment?

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

1. Practical tips and advice about courtroom management
2. Independent Living / Transitional Plans