

Massachusetts Court Improvement Program 2017 Annual Self-Assessment Report

The annual self-assessment provides an opportunity for the Court Improvement Programs to review progress on required CIP projects, joint program planning and improvement efforts with the child welfare agency, and ability to integrate CQI successfully into practice. Questions are designed to solicit candid responses that help CIPs apply CQI and identify support that may be helpful.

I. CQI Analyses of Required CIP Projects

Joint Projects with the Department of Children and Families

Provide a concise description of the joint project selected in your jurisdiction.

The two FY17 highest priority CIP projects in some stage of the CQI process continue to be:

- 1.) Completing the Massachusetts Guide on the Disclosure of Confidential Information.
- 2.) Completing the inter-agency research project, “Designing Data-Driven Directions for School Success of Children in Care.”

During the Regional CIP meeting in Washington, D.C., the participants decided that the next joint project will be built on the School Success study. Our next CIP joint project will be:

- 3.) Assessing the impact of educational instability on permanency, articulating a theory of change, and identifying interventions that address the root causes of educational instability and its relationship, if any, to time to permanency.

Identify the specific safety, permanency, or well-being outcome this project is intended to address.

- 1.) The Guide on the Disclosure of Confidential Information is designed to improve quality legal representation and improve well-being outcomes by providing a resource guide and quick reference grid on federal and state confidentiality laws and policies addressing sharing of information by the Department of Children and Families, Juvenile Court, Probate and Family Court, Juvenile Justice, Education, attorneys for children and parents as well as medical, mental health and substance use treatment providers. The Guide, the product of a dedicated cross-system group of attorneys and practitioners, was developed to provide a better understanding of how and when information can and cannot be disclosed in order to improve the well-being of children and youth in care.
- 2.) The collaborative research project, "Designing Data-Driven Directions for School Success of Children in Care," is designed to improve well-being by identifying factors which lead to school success for children in care. The Project Support Committee was composed of IT,

policy, legal and educational representatives from DCF, legal and IT representatives from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE), attorneys for children and families including those who specialize in educational advocacy, as well as court and CIP representatives.

3.) The educational stability and time to permanency project will be designed to improve education stability in order to decrease time to permanency and improve well-being outcomes.

Approximate date that the project began:

- 1.) December 2013
- 2.) Winter 2015
- 3.) June 2017

Which stage of the CQI process best describes the current status of project work?

1.) Phase IV: Plan, Prepare and Implement. Currently the draft Guide is being reviewed by agencies and courts. Following approval, the Guide will be published and posted on the CIP website.

2.) Phase V. Evaluate and Apply Findings. Boston University School of Social Work has completed analysis of data and made recommendations in the final report to Mass CIP.

3.) Phase I. Identify and Assess Needs. The framework for designing a new project based on school data research was developed at the regional CIP meeting on June 19 - 20, 2017.

How was the need for this project identified?

1.) A Juvenile Court judge on the CIP Steering Committee voiced her concern with information being shared in violation of the law, which had a negative impact on youth in care, especially affecting their education and their increased referral into the juvenile court system. Her participation with other CIP representatives from DCF and the courts in a conference held at Georgetown on information sharing, solidified the need for the development of a Guide on the Disclosure of Confidential Information for Massachusetts. The CIP Steering Committee decided that information is frequently shared without compliance with federal and state privilege and confidentiality laws. The laws are complicated and there isn't a Massachusetts reference guide to inform decision making on sharing information concerning children and families, especially those in state care. While the sharing of information is usually intended to support children and families, sometimes there are unintended negative consequences. A comprehensive compilation of the federal and state laws governing confidentiality and information sharing was needed to address these concerns.

2.) An education stability committee was convened by Mass CIP over five years ago to address concerns about the poor educational outcomes of children in state custody. The CIP Steering Committee recommended a research study to provide data to support anecdotal information concerning the school experiences of children in care. Mass CIP contracted with the

Boston University School of Social Work to conduct the data collection and analysis needed for the project.

3.) Representatives from the Juvenile Court, DCF and Mass CIP met at the regional CIP meeting in Washington DC and determined that the data from the BU research will be combined with other DCF data, updated with current and future data from DCF and the courts to determine whether school stability influenced the length of time to permanency for children.

What is the theory of change for the project?

1.) Mass CIP will improve well-being outcomes for children and youth in care and improve quality legal representation by expanding knowledge of state and federal confidentiality and privilege law and the sharing of information. The development and publication of the Guide on the Disclosure of Confidential Information, along with cross-training, will lead to the legal sharing of information so that children and families will have more positive outcomes.

2.) Quantitative data from courts, schools and DCF as well as qualitative data from social workers, school personnel and attorneys for children and parents, will be analyzed to identify actions that will be taken to improve educational outcomes for children and youth in state custody.

3.) The theory of change will be determined by Fall 2017 by the CIP Joint Project Team.

If you do not yet have a theory of change and/or would like assistance, please indicate such in the space below.

1.) Not Applicable

2.) Not Applicable

3.) We will be calling on CBCC, Kathleen McNaught at the ABA Center on Children and the Law and also contact other state CIPs that have worked on educational stability.

Have you identified a solution/intervention that you will implement? If yes, what is it?

1.) The solution we have identified is convening representatives from all collaborative professionals working with children in care to create a Guide on the Disclosure of Confidential Information based on state and federal law and policy. Upon completion of the Guide, it will be published and placed on the CIP website. CIP will support cross-trainings on the law, policy and practice surrounding information sharing.

2.) The final report from the Boston University research team will be reviewed at the next Mass CIP Steering Committee meeting to develop strategies to implement the recommendations.

3.) Mass CIP will facilitate a consensus workshop to identify which BU educational research report recommendations the new joint project will focus upon; gather additional data; identify significant barriers to success before determining possible interventions; and develop a theory of change that articulates how the new educational stability project will address stability and well-being outcomes.

What has been done to implement the project?

1.) The collaborative group has been meeting for the past three years to draft the Guide. Upon completion it will be placed on the CIP web site and published.

2.) In FY17 the Boston University research team received and analyzed matching data from DCF, courts and The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Representatives from DCF, courts, education and CIP drafted and refined a qualitative questionnaire which was completed by social workers, school counselors, and attorneys for children and parents. The qualitative analysis was included in the report. The collaborative CIP group met with the BU researchers to provide feedback on their final report draft in May 2017. BU completed work on the research project by presenting their final report.

3.) The project was conceived at the Regional CIP meeting. Currently CIP is identifying and assessing need based upon analysis of the BU educational study.

What is being done or how do you intend to monitor the progress of the project?

1.) Mass CIP will continue to convene meetings of the collaborative drafting committee to make decisions on the development of the printed Guide and the Guide that will be placed on the Mass CIP website. The CIP committee will continue to meet to update the Guide and plan trainings on information sharing. CIP will design pre- and post-training assessments to determine whether the participants have learned new concepts.

2.) The research project is completed. During the reporting period, the committee had weekly phone supervision with BU to ensure progress of the project. Mass CIP will edit the report so that the findings and recommendations can be provided to schools, DCF, attorneys and court personnel. The recommendations will be considered as the new education stability project is designed and implemented.

3.) The project will initially identify and assess need by analyzing data from the BU study along with additional data from DCF.

What assistance or support would be helpful from the CBCC or Children's Bureau to help move the project forward?

1.) No assistance is needed since the project is nearing completion.

- 2.) No assistance is needed since the project is nearing completion.
- 3.) CBCC and the Children's Bureau could be quite helpful as we develop the new education stability and permanency improvement project.

Hearing Quality Project:

Provide a concise description of the joint project selected in your jurisdiction.

To improve substance and timeliness of permanency hearings for children in state custody by revising and updating the court rule governing permanency hearings, which should lead to improved well-being outcomes for children and youth.

Approximate date that the project began:

January 2015

Which stage of the CQI process best describes the current status of project work?

Plan, Prepare and Implement: New rule is at the Trial Court for final approval.

How was the need for this project identified?

CIP staff and Steering Committee evaluated data on timeliness of permanency hearings and discussed anecdotal evidence from judges on hearing quality. CIP staff and Steering Committee observed the need to incorporate federal and state requirements for permanency hearings into a new rule. Additionally, a CIP committee analyzed data indicating poor participation of youth in permanency hearings.

What is the theory of change for the project?

Redrafting and implementing a new rule will lead to substantive and timely permanency hearings; engaging family and youth will lead to better well-being outcomes for children and youth.

If you do not yet have a theory of change and/or would like assistance, please indicate such in the space below.

Have you identified a solution/intervention that you will implement? If yes, what is it?

The Trial Court Rule VI was redrafted. CIP will support initiatives that will assist in implementing the rule.

What has been done to implement the project?

The new rule is at the Trial Court for final approval and implementation.

What is being done or how do you intend to monitor the progress of the project?

CIP will analyze data on timeliness of hearings and time to permanency to determine if new rule improves outcomes for children and youth. We will look at new court data for increase of participation of youth and families in permanency hearings.

What assistance or support would be helpful from the CBCC or Children’s Bureau to help move the project forward?

CIP will consult with CBCC and Children's Bureau to move the project forward.

II. Trainings, Projects, and Activities *For questions 1-9, provide a concise description of work completed or underway to date in FY 2017 (October 2016-June 2017) in the below topical subcategories.*

For question 1, focus on significant training events or initiatives held or developed in FY 2017 and answer the corresponding questions.

1. Trainings

<i>Topical Area</i>	<i>Did you hold or develop a training on this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>How did you evaluate this training?</i>
Data: quarterly reporting on trial court metrics and timeliness measures by Child Welfare Data Analyst	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	CIP Steering Committee, Administrative Office of Juvenile Court	Understand timeliness measures	Discussion on understanding data
Hearing quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Attorneys	Trial practice skills substantive and procedural law	Post-training evaluation
Improving timeliness/permanency	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Judges, Attorneys, DCF and court personnel	Review of reasonable efforts requirements by Judge Edwards	Written evaluations after 2 trainings and increase in appeals based on reasonable efforts.

<i>Topical Area</i>	<i>Did you hold or develop a training on this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>How did you evaluate this training?</i>
Quality legal representation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Funded participation in numerous trainings and conferences for child welfare lawyers and judges.	Certification, improve knowledge of procedural and substantive law, improve interviewing skills, improve litigation skills	Post training evaluation
Engagement & participation of parties: National Adoption Day	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Families and adoptees	Create supportive environment to encourage and celebrate adoptions	
Well-being: Supported conference on Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Lawyers, Judges, Social Workers and Service Providers	Understanding of implicit bias; micro-aggressions and the impact on well-being of children and families.	Post training evaluation
ICWA: funded DCF ICWA coordinator's participation in NICWA conference.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	DCF ICWA coordinator	Understanding new ICWA regulations, networking	
Sex Trafficking	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Juvenile Court Administrative staff	Increase knowledge of sex trafficking in Massachusetts	

<i>Topical Area</i>	<i>Did you hold or develop a training on this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>How did you evaluate this training?</i>
<p>Other: Reasonable efforts</p> <p>Funded juvenile court judges conference on child welfare</p> <p>Funded lawyers participation in numerous conferences (ABA, MCLE, NLADA, NACC)</p> <p>Funded Supervising Social Workers participation in CWLA conference</p> <p>Funded Juvenile Court judges participation in annual NCJFCJ conference</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<p>Attorneys</p> <p>Judges</p> <p>Child Welfare Attorneys</p> <p>Supervising social worker</p> <p>Juvenile Court judges</p>	<p>Improve quality of representation by understanding “reasonable efforts” as litigation tool</p> <p>Improve understanding of “reasonable efforts” requirements; importance of educational stability</p> <p>Increase knowledge of child welfare issues, improve knowledge of procedural and substantive law</p> <p>Increase knowledge of cutting edge substance use programs, practices and policies.</p> <p>Increase knowledge of child welfare issues</p>	<p>Post training evaluation</p>

On average, with ordinary funding levels, how many training events do you hold per year?

We supported and helped plan 10 training events and supported participation of our collaborative partners in 14 additional training events.

What is your best prediction for the number of attorneys and judges that attend a training annually?

Approximately 1,000 attorneys and judges attended trainings.

2. **Data Projects.** *Data projects include any work with administrative data sets (e. g., AFCARS, SACWIS), data dashboards, data reports, fostering court improvement data, case management systems, and data sharing efforts.*

Do you have a data project/activity? Yes No (skip to #3)

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Designing Data-Driven Directions for School Success of Children in Care	Education and Health Data Sharing	Evaluation/Assessment
Data reports to Steering Committee and Juvenile Court Administrative Office	Agency Data Sharing Efforts	Identifying/Assessing Needs
Providing business intelligence software to juvenile/probate and family court judges to improve case management	Fostering Court Improvement data projects	Identifying/Assessing Needs
Supported Child Welfare Data Analyst's position	Court data analysis and oversight of data research	Identifying/Assessing Needs

(a) Do you have data reports that you consistently view? Yes No

(b) How are these reports used to support your work?

Quarterly reports on timeliness and permanency assist in identifying and assessing needs. Data informs development of theories of change.

3. **Hearing Quality.** *Hearing quality projects include any efforts you have made to improve the quality of dependency hearings, including court observation/assessment projects, process improvements, specialty/pilot court projects, projects related to court orders or title IV-E determinations, mediation, or appeals.*

Do you have a hearing quality project/activity? Yes No (skip to #4)

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Revision of Trial Court Permanency Rule	Process Improvements	Implementation

4. **Improving Timeliness of Hearings or Permanency Outcomes.** *Timeliness and permanency projects include any activities or projects meant to improve the timeliness of case processing or achievement of timely permanency. This could include general*

timeliness, focus on continuances or appeals, working on permanency goals other than APPLA, or focus on APPLA and older youth.

Do you have a Timeliness or permanency project/activity? Yes No (skip to #5)

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Revision of Trial Court Rule VI on Permanency Hearings	General/ASFA	Implementation

5. Quality of Legal Representation. *Quality of legal representation projects may include any activities/efforts related to improvement of representation for parents, youth, or the agency. This might include assessments or analyzing current practice, implementing new practice models, working with law school clinics, or other activities in this area.*

Do you have a quality legal representation project/activity? Yes No (skip to #6)

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Training for attorneys for children, parents and DCF	Other	Implementation

6. Engagement & Participation of Parties. *Engagement and participation of parties includes any efforts centered around youth, parent, foster family, or caregiver engagement, as well as projects related to notice to relatives, limited English proficiency, or other efforts to increase presence and engagement at the hearing.*

Do you have an engagement or participation of parties project/activity? Yes No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Revision/Publication/Distribution of Guide for Caregivers	Caregiver Engagement	Implementation
Revision/Publication/Distribution of Answer Book	Youth Engagement	Implementation
Funded Client Contact Position at CAFL to ensure lawyers are meeting with clients as required by legal standards.	Other	Implementation
Publication of Parent Guide to Child Requiring Assistance booklet in 3 languages	Parent/Caregiver engagement	Implementation

7. **Well-Being.** *Well-being projects include any efforts related to improving the well-being of youth. Projects could focus on education, early childhood development, psychotropic medication, LGBTQ youth, trauma, racial disproportionality/disparity, immigration, or other well-being related topics.*

Do you have any projects/activities focused on well-being? Yes No (skip to #8)

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Revision of The Answer Book 2016	Other	Implementation
Funded Social Worker position to support lawyers representing children and parents to gain services and supports to improve well-being.	Other	Implementation

8. **ICWA.** *ICWA projects could include any efforts to enhance state and tribal collaboration, state and tribal court agreements, data collection and analysis of ICWA compliance, or ICWA notice projects.*

Do you have any projects/activities focused on ICWA? Yes No (skip to #9)

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Revision of the ICWA Navigation Card	ICWA Notice	Implementing Changes
Funded ICWA position at the Department of Children and Families	Data collection/assessment	Implementation

9. **Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (PSTFSA).** *PSTFSA projects could include any work around domestic child sex trafficking, the reasonable and prudent parent standard, a focus on runaway youth, focus on normalcy, collaboration with other agencies around this topic, data collection and analysis, data sharing, or other efforts to fully implement the act into practice.*

Do you have any projects/activities focused on PSTSFA? Yes No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Updating Trial Court Rule VI to comply with PSTSFA	Reasonable & Prudent Parent	Implementation

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Training on preventing sex trafficking presented by My Life My Choice	Sex Trafficking	Completed

III. CIP Collaboration in Child Welfare Program Planning and Improvement Efforts

Please describe how the CIP has been involved with the state's CFSP due June 30, 2017.

DCF invited CIP to participate in the CFSP. CIP collected, analyzed and shared data with DCF that was used in the report.

Please describe how the CIP was or will be involved in the most recent/upcoming title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Review in your state.

DCF invited a CIP representative to participate in the most recent Title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Review.

Please describe how the CIP is or was involved in preparing and completing round 3 of the CFSR and PIP, if required, in your state.

CIP participated in a phone conference with federal CFSR evaluators. CIP reviewed the CFSR and the PIP and met with DCF staff preparing revisions to the PIP. CIP Steering Committee meeting discussions and data distributions are informing future CIP/DCF joint projects.

Are there any strategies or processes in place in your state that you feel are particularly effective in supporting joint child welfare program planning and improvement?

There are two representatives from DCF on the CIP Steering Committee: General Counsel and Assistant Commissioner for Policy and Planning. The Steering Committee meets monthly to discuss joint projects. Representatives of DCF are on CIP sub-committees and participated in CIP regional meeting. Aggregate court and DCF data are shared between DCF and CIP.

Does the state child welfare agency currently offer professional partner training to judges, attorneys, and court personnel as part of its title IV-E Training Plan ?

CIP will support DCF in their efforts to offer professional partner trainings to judges, attorneys, and court personnel as part of its title IV-E Training Plan. There are currently discussions regarding trainings on new Departmental policies which will be held at courthouses around the state inviting both judges, court personnel and attorneys.

If yes, please provide a brief description of what is provided and how.

The discussions currently are about conducting trainings regarding the Department's new Family Assessment and Action Plan. This training would be held at certain juvenile courts around the state and would have judges, court personnel and attorneys attending. Additionally,

there is a desire that trainings will be offered regarding immigration issues of children in state custody.

If no, have you met with child welfare agency leadership to discuss and explore utilizing professional partner training for judges, attorneys and court personnel?

The state child welfare agency participates in the CIP training committee to collaborate on statewide trainings for stakeholders. Proposed trainings are being planned for the Fall.

Which category or categories of activity best describe current CIP data efforts with the child welfare agency?

- Contributing data Receiving data Jointly using data
 Collaborative meetings Collaborative systems change project(s)
 Other: _____

IV. CQI Current Capacity Assessment

1. *Has your ability to integrate CQI into practice changed this year? If yes, what do you attribute the increase in ability to?*

Continued support of child welfare data analyst through CIP data grant increases CIP's capacity to integrate CQI into practice. Data collection is being enhanced through the expansion of business intelligence systems.

2. *Which of the following CBCC Events/Services have you/your staff engaged in in the 2017 Fiscal Year?*

- Annual CIP Meeting CQI Consult (*Topic:* _____)
 Constituency Group – ICWA Constituency Group – Anti-Trafficking
 Constituency Group – New Directors Constituency Group – APPLA/Older Youth
 CIP All Call — *What % of All Calls does your CIP participate in? 100%*

3. *Do you have any of the following resources to help you integrate CQI into practice?*

- CIP staff with CQI (e.g., data, evaluation) expertise Consultants with CQI expertise
 a University partnership Contracts with external agencies to assist with CQI efforts
 Other resources: _____

3. *Describe the largest challenges your CIP faces with implementing CQI into your work.*

Using data to improve a shift in culture and practice throughout the child welfare system.

4. *Is there a topic or practice area that you would find useful from the Capacity Building Center for Courts? Be as specific as possible (e.g., data analysis, how to evaluate trainings, more information on research about quality legal representation, how to facilitate group meetings, etc.)*

Motivating stakeholders to utilize data to evaluate, improve outcomes and how then to utilize this for more collaboration.

APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

Definitions of Evidence

Evidence-based practice – evidence-based practices are practice that have been empirically tested in a rigorous way (involving random assignment to groups), have demonstrated effectiveness related to specific outcomes, have been replicated in practice at least one, and have findings published in peer reviewed journal articles.

Empirically-supported- less rigorous than evidence-based practices are empirically-supported practices. To be empirically supported, a program must have been evaluated in some way and have demonstrated some relationship to a positive outcome. This may not meet the rigor of evidence-base, but still has some support for effectiveness.

Best-practices – best practices are often those widely accepted in the field as good practice. They may or may not have empirical support as to effectiveness, but are often derived from teams of experts in the field.

Definitions for Work Stages

Identifying and Assessing Needs – This phase is the earliest phase in the process, where you are identifying a need to be addressed. The assessing needs phase includes identifying the need, determining if there is available data demonstrating that this a problem, forming teams to address the issue.

Develop theory of change—This phase focuses on the theorizing the causes of a problem. In this phase you would identify what you think might be causing the problem and develop a “theory of change”. The theory of change is essentially how you think your activities (or intervention) will improve outcomes.

Develop/select solution—This phase includes developing or selecting a solution. In this phase, you might be exploring potential best-practices or evidence-based practices that you may want to implement as a solution to the identified need. You might also be developing a specific training, program, or practice that you want to implement.

Implementation – the implementation phase of work is when an intervention is being piloted or tested. This includes adapting programs or practices to meet your needs, and developing implementation supports.

Evaluation/assessment – the evaluation and assessment phase includes any efforts to collect data about the fidelity (process measures: was it implemented as planned?) or effectiveness (outcome measures: is the intervention making a difference?) of the project. The evaluation assessment phase also includes post-evaluation efforts to apply findings, such as making changes to the program/practice and using the data to inform next steps.