

## **State Court Improvement Program 2021 Annual Self-Assessment Report**

This self-assessment is intended as an opportunity for Court Improvement Programs (CIPs) to review progress on CIP projects, joint program planning and improvement efforts with the child welfare agency, and the ability to integrate CQI successfully into practice. The self-assessment process is designed to help shape and inform ongoing strategic planning and should include meaningful discussion with the multi-disciplinary task force and candid reflection of key CIP staff. The self-assessment primarily focused on assessing efforts undertaken to date while the strategic plan maps out efforts going forward in more detail. Questions are designed to solicit candid responses that help CIPs apply CQI and identify support that may be helpful.

### **I. CQI Analyses of Required Projects**

#### **Joint Project with the Child Welfare Agency:**

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

CIP staff is involved in two collaborative projects that include the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and other child welfare stakeholders: Adoption Call to Action and Kinship Navigator.

**Adoption Call to Action:** CIP meets regularly with representatives from DCF, Child and Family Law (CAFL), the Courts, and two community adoption agencies to identify and reduce barriers to timely permanency with the goal of increasing adoptions, especially of teens and children who are non-white.

**Kinship Navigator:** CIP works collaboratively with DCF and the Grandparents' Commission to develop and expand the Kinship Navigator Program. This pilot project is designed to provide information on court process and referrals to needed services to stabilize placements with kin caregivers, especially those seeking guardianship in Probate and Family Court.

##### **Identify the specific safety, permanency, or well-being outcome(s) this project is intended to address.**

**Adoption Call to Action:** Improve timely permanency for children by identifying and eliminating barriers to adoption. The goal is to decrease the time to adoption, while increasing the number of adoptions.

**Kinship Navigator:** Provide support to kinship caregivers who are obtaining guardianship through Probate and Family Court. The program is designed to educate potential caregivers on the Probate and Family Court guardianship process and to stabilize placements to ensure permanency, to support continuity of family relationships, and to promote the well-being of children.

##### **Approximate date that the project began:**

**Adoption Call to Action:** Began in July 2019 when CIP staff identified key stakeholders to participate in the Adoption Call to Action Conference in Washington, D.C. The working group was composed of several DCF and CIP staff as well as representatives from the Juvenile Court, the Children and Family Law Division of the Committee for Public Counsel Services (CAFL), and two community adoption agencies: The Cambridge Family and Children's Services, and the Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE).

**Kinship Navigator:** Began collaborating with CIP in September 2020.

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

**Adoption Call to Action:** Implementation Stage.

**Kinship Navigator:** Implementation Stage.

**How was the need for this project identified? (Phase I)**

**Adoption Call to Action:** CIP, DCF, the Juvenile Court, and the Trial Court's Department of Research and Planning (DRAP) analyzed data from Juvenile Court, DCF, and the latest CFSR which indicated serious delays in reaching permanency, in particular adoption for children in care more than 12 months. DCF data revealed that the rates of adoption within 24 months of home removal had declined between 2015 and 2019, with the FY19 median time to adoption 38.4 months compared to 31.4 months in FY15. DCF FY19 data also revealed that only 13.8% of children had their adoption finalized in less than 24 months following their removal from home, compared to 25.8% in FY15. Juvenile Court data indicated that adoption finalizations had decreased to 664 in FY17. By FY18, the number of children adopted increased to 826 and after initiation of the DCF program to track cases weekly, by FY19, the number grew to 962. The DCF Annual Report revealed that adoption of teens was extremely rare and that non-white children were in care at a disproportionately higher rate than white children and were not reaching permanency as quickly. FY20 data indicated slight improvement in adoption of older or non-white children, an indicator that this adoption effort needs to continue. Finally, attorneys and social workers indicated a need for a tool to educate potential caregivers on the different rights and responsibilities of guardianship compared to adoption.

**The Kinship Navigator:** CIP reviewed quantitative data including a 2019 study and report by the University of Massachusetts Medical Center which showed there were approximately 10,000 children living with their grandparents with no parent present. Additionally, FY20 court data indicated there were 2,859 guardianship of minor petitions filed in Probate and Family Court. It is expected this number will increase post pandemic as there were 3,802 guardianship of minor petitions filed in FY19. DCF received a federal grant to establish a Kinship Navigator program to support these relative caregivers. CIP was invited to participate in this project. CIP staff interviewed current relative caregivers and members of the Grandparent's Commission to identify what the caregivers needed to make the placements successful. Caregivers indicated difficulty understanding the legal guardianship process and the need for supports and services to stabilize the placement once they obtained guardianship. The Guide for Relative Caregivers CIP had previously developed was a useful resource but was outdated and did not address the legal process required to obtain a guardianship.

**What is the theory of change for the project? (Phase II)**

**Adoption Call to Action:** By identifying and reducing barriers to adoption through the development and implementing of collaborative interventions, the time to permanency will decrease and the number of adoptions and guardianships will increase.

**The Kinship Navigator Program:** The Custody Guide for Child Caregivers will help potential guardians understand how to complete the legal process for obtaining guardianship. Once guardianship is obtained the Kinship Navigator Program will stabilize kinship placements by facilitating supports and services to caregivers and children.

**Have you identified a solution/intervention that you will implement? YES (Phase III)**

**Adoption Call to Action:** The solution CIP identified was continuing the work of the Adoption Call to Action Committee, a collaborative intervention including CIP, DCF, the Juvenile Court, CAFL, and community adoption agencies. The committee identified virtual training as a valuable tool during the pandemic for recruiting and training adoptive resources. We identified creative ways to hold adoption hearings especially during National Adoption Day and discussed developing creative alternate adoption venues during the pandemic. Providing virtual trainings to adoption social workers and pre-adoptive and adoptive parents offered support during the pandemic. CIP and child welfare stakeholders developed, printed, and are distributing a guide which distinguishes the rights and responsibilities in a guardianship and an adoption for children who have been in foster care.

**Kinship Navigator:** Caregivers in support groups identified the need for a detailed legal guide to assist caregivers in obtaining guardianship and the need for supports and services to stabilize the placement. CIP staff, with the assistance of child welfare stakeholders, developed a legal guide for kinship caregivers. CIP is collaborating with DCF to implement a statewide Kinship Navigator Program which will link guardianship petitioners with Kinship Navigator staff to identify specific needs of the family. The Kinship Navigator staff will provide referrals to the supports needed to stabilize the placement.

**What has been done to implement the project? (Phase IV)**

**Adoption Call to Action:** The Adoption Call to Action committee meets bi-monthly to review data and to discuss progress in reducing time to adoption. DCF developed two projects to decrease the time to permanency. The first project initiated a review 6 weeks after the filing of a care and protection petition. A meeting is held with parents, the attorneys and DCF staff to discuss the safety issues that led to removal of the child. If the child cannot be safely returned home at the 6-week review, additional services which support reunification are identified and implemented along with concurrent permanency plans. Continuation of this 6-week review during the pandemic has been challenging. The second DCF project conducts weekly review of cases where children are legally freed for adoption and placed in an adoptive home. Barriers to finalizing the adoption are addressed until no barriers remain and the adoption can be finalized, decreasing the time to adoption and increasing the number of adoptions. CIP sponsored Trust-based Relational Intervention Training for 80 pre-adoptive and adoptive parents to help stabilize the placement so the adoption will occur and be permanent. CIP funded one MARE employee to complete certification in the intervention to facilitate further statewide trainings. Virtual trainings

have been developed and implemented to recruit and train potential adoptive resources and social work staff to increase and stabilize adoptions. Despite the impact of the pandemic on finalizing adoptions, innovative methods of completing adoptions by zoom, in family backyards, or in courthouse parking lots, have provided needed enthusiasm. The Juvenile Court with the assistance of MARE, developed a video featuring Governor Baker and several adoptive families (including an older teen) to be used to kick off National Adoption Day in November. These and other projects are reviewed at our bi-monthly Adoption Call to Action meetings. CIP supported the collaborative development, printing and distribution of a guide which distinguishes the rights and responsibilities of a guardianship and an adoption for children who have been in foster care. **Kinship Navigator:** CIP staff meets weekly with the director of the Kinship Navigator Program and the director of the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Commission to review progress and to discuss next steps. Meetings with staff of Probate and Family Court occur to develop court process operation. CIP staff developed a legal guide for kinship caregivers, printed the guide in three languages, posted it on the CIP website, and is distributing the guide to potential guardians. CIP is collaborating with DCF to implement a statewide Kinship Navigator Program which will link guardianship petitioners with Kinship Navigator staff to identify specific needs of the family and provide referrals to the supports needed to stabilize the placement. The collaborative program is working with court personnel to integrate seamlessly into the process of obtaining a legal guardianship in Probate and Family Court and provide a valuable referral resource for caregivers who need additional supports to provide safe and stable homes for the children in their care. Currently, the program is established in Bristol, Barnstable, and Essex Counties. Additionally, discussions are underway to extend the program statewide in Probate and Family Court and to third party custodians in Juvenile Court. CIP is supporting the Kinship Navigator in its request for continued funding in FFY22.

**How are you or how do you intend to monitor the progress of the project? (Phase V)**

*Be specific in terms of what type of evaluation (e.g., fidelity or outcome, comparison group, etc.) and what results you have, if any. If you have already evaluated your effort, how did you use these data to modify or expand the project?*

**Adoption Call to Action:** CIP will use quantitative data analysis to examine the increase in the number of adoptions and the length of time to completion of adoption, especially for teens, and non-white children and youth waiting for adoption. The collaborative will continue to examine data from DCF and Juvenile Court to measure progress and to identify areas needing more focus. In addition, the meetings will focus on recruitment and training efforts of the adoption agencies and DCF and coordination of court adoption events in the coming year.

**Kinship Navigator:** The Child Welfare Data Analyst is developing Kinship Navigator docket codes to measure the number of referrals from Probate and Family Court. CIP will use that and other data to evaluate the success of the program. For example, Kinship Navigator Program is working with Mathematica consulting company to identify and collect relevant data to assess caregivers accessing supports which should increase placement stability. Data will be collected every six months on such issues as access to child only grants from the Department of Transitional Assistance, childcare placements, and length of time in home of caregiver. CIP will monitor distribution of The Custody Guide for Child Caregivers, hits on the CIP website, and will survey caregiver support groups to evaluate the effectiveness of the Custody Guide.

**Have there been notable factors that delayed or accelerated this effort?**

**Adoption Call to Action:** The pandemic and the closing of courts significantly impacted all court operations. Currently most court events are held virtually which takes more time. As a result, there has been a delay in termination of parental rights cases and adoptions. In state fiscal year 2020 there was a goal of 1,006 adoptions, but only 826 adoptions were completed due to the pandemic. In this fiscal year, there have been 698 adoptions, despite a goal of 1,006. Recruitment and matches have been significantly impacted by the pandemic.

**Kinship Navigator:** Implementation of the Kinship Navigator Program was also delayed due to the pandemic and the closing of courts. However, guardianship petitions are now filed and heard virtually. The Kinship Navigator Pilot Project is now rolling out in three counties, a first step in statewide implementation.

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

Technical assistance would be helpful on strategies for recruitment of pre-adoptive homes especially for non-white and older youth.

**Hearing Quality Project:**

**Provide a concise description of the hearing quality project selected in your jurisdiction.**

CIP supports efforts designed to improve permanency for children by ensuring quality court hearings through: extensive training and certification standards for child welfare attorneys; timely remote hearings; implementation of Pathways; a statewide differential case management system; training on child safety criteria and reasonable efforts; and development of a court process guide for caregivers in Probate and Family Court.

**Approximate date that the project began:** The Quality Hearing Project began and has continued with different start dates as indicated. In December 2018, court data revealed delays in initial hearings due to a shortage of child welfare attorneys in western and central Massachusetts. In the spring of 2019, the Juvenile Court convened a stakeholder conference to announce implementation of Pathways, a differentiated case management system. Planning for in-person child safety trainings for attorneys, social workers and judges began in FY20, but was delayed and converted into virtual training in FY21 because of the pandemic. When the pandemic ended in-person trainings, CIP supported staff to transition to develop and implement virtual trainings. Finally, Kinship Navigator program initially reached out to CIP in September 2020 for assistance in providing court process information for kin caregivers.

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

The several projects designed to ensure quality hearings are all in the implementation stage. They include: supporting and expanding virtual trainings for lawyers, social workers, and judges; ensuring quality legal representation for parents and children immediately following the children's removal and throughout the case; incorporating a statewide differential case

management system to improve timely permanency; training lawyers, social workers, and judges on using objective criteria to assess the safety of children during FY21; and supporting the roll out of the Kinship Navigator program by developing and distributing a Custody Guide for Child Caregivers.

### **How was the need for this project identified? (Phase I)**

**Supporting and expanding virtual trainings:** With the closing of the courthouses in March 2020, it became apparent that the courts would need to adjust their hearing process from in-person to virtual court hearings and attorneys would need to be trained virtually on virtual hearings. Initially, all courts were closed to the public and only emergency hearings were held. Training and supplies were needed to support attorneys and court personnel in improving virtual hearings for all cases.

**Ensuring quality legal representation:** Three years ago, data on timely appointment of attorneys indicated that there were insufficient attorneys available in central and in western Massachusetts to hold every temporary custody hearing within 72 hours of removal as required by law. CIP staff interviewed approximately 40 lawyers and 5 judges in western Massachusetts to determine factors leading to the shortage.

**Incorporating a statewide differential case management system:** Federal AFCARS data indicates that Massachusetts is in the bottom third of the nation on achieving permanency for children who are in care for more than twelve months. State data indicates that the courts are unable to comply with their permanency timeliness standards on many cases. Court hearings are often delayed, especially during the pandemic.

**Training on Child Safety:** Reviewing and analyzing timeliness data provided by the CIP funded Child Welfare Data Analyst, indicated that time to permanency through reunification had increased during the pandemic from 12.2 months in CY19 to 13.0 mos. in CY20; for completing adoption: from 40.9 mos. in CY19 to 41.3 mos. in CY20, and for guardianship from 33 mos. in CY19 to 35.2 mos. in CY20.

**Developing a court process guide for Kinship Navigator:** Interviews with kinship caregivers revealed a lack of information about the process for obtaining a guardianship in Probate and Family Court, especially during the pandemic when filing is done through new virtual court service centers and the virtual registry. Many court hearings are held virtually.

### **What is the theory of change for the project? (Phase II)**

Quality court hearings will improve the time to permanency. There will be more timely reunifications based on child safety, more adoptions and guardianships within time standards, and incorporating the Pathways model into practice will improve the timeliness of court hearings.

### **Have you identified a solution/intervention that you will implement? YES**

#### **If yes, what is it? (Phase III)**

Improve the quality of court hearings by: supporting trainings for lawyers, social workers, and judges on legal and social issues surrounding child welfare; ensuring the appointment of quality legal representation for parents and children immediately following the children's removal;

incorporating a statewide differential case management system to ensure timely permanency; training lawyers, social workers and judges on using objective criteria to assess the safety of children; and educating caregivers in the legal guardianship process by developing and distributing a Custody Guide for Child Caregivers.

#### **What has been done to implement the project? (Phase IV)**

To ensure quality hearings, CIP continues to support CAFL's efforts to create a high quality training program, now done virtually, which includes a week-long certification program, a trial practice training, and day-long seminars on relevant topics such as expert witnesses, trial practice, and legal writing. CIP sponsors the participation of lawyers, social workers, and judges in conferences and workshops and provides training guides. CIP provided guides on federal and state child welfare law and policy and appellate practice to attorneys, judges, and clerk magistrates.

CIP works to support efforts to provide quality legal counsel to all children and indigent parents upon the filing of a care and protection petition. The CIP funded Child Welfare Date Analyst has developed a dashboard to indicate the timeliness of initial appointments. The dashboard analyzes appointment data from every county which assists in identifying gaps in legal resources. The dashboard is shared with court personnel and CAFL, the appointing authority, ensuring counsel is appointed in almost all cases within days of the child's removal. Data consistently demonstrates a shortage of child welfare lawyers in Western Massachusetts. CIP supports expanding the legal pool in Western Massachusetts by developing and funding a fellowship program with Western New England School of Law. Upon the completion of a child welfare curriculum, an internship and graduation, fellows work under the supervision of a child welfare attorney until they pass the bar exam. During that time, they complete course work and receive certification to practice child welfare law. After passing the bar they are prepared to accept child welfare cases. Two fellows completed the program in this fiscal year and became certified CAFL attorneys practicing in western Massachusetts. Two more fellows began the program this year and are interning this summer until they pass the bar exam in the fall.

CIP has encouraged DCF and CAFL to reach an agreement on the drawing down of IV-E funds for expanded legal representation of children and families. It is expected that providing pre-filing representation, a proposed use of the funds, will decrease the number of care and protection filings. This will enable the court to deal with the backlog created by the pandemic.

CIP has funded a full-time Manager of Pathways position with the Juvenile Court to develop and implement a differentiated case management system designed to improve the quality and timeliness of court hearings to improve permanency for children. The Manager has held three virtual state-wide judicial trainings and worked intensely with three counties to develop strategies to improve the timeliness of court hearings. Bench cards with essential questions on permanency, risk/safety and educational stability have been distributed to all judges. A resource guide has been developed and distributed to judges to improve judicial case reviews, trial scheduling and permanency planning hearings. Docketing codes have been updated to accurately

record court events. In collaboration with the Child Welfare Data Analyst, dashboards on timeliness are being developed and will be distributed to judges and clerks to identify barriers to timeliness.

CIP organized and funded a statewide four-part virtual training on the ABA Child Safety Guide to incorporate objective, safety decision making as part of all court proceedings. About three hundred practitioners participated including attorneys and social workers. CIP purchased the Child Safety Guide for all judges in the Commonwealth and for the CAFL attorneys.

CIP developed and printed a Custody Guide for Child Caregivers to assist caregivers in understanding the court hearing process for obtaining a guardianship. It explains how to file a petition for guardianship and participate in hearings remotely by accessing the Court Service Center or the Virtual Registry. The Guide is published in three languages, is being distributed at the Probate and Family Court, and is available for caregivers on the CIP website.

To reach the general goal of improving hearing quality and the timeliness of hearings, CIP purchased redaction software and scanners for DCF to reduce delays with discovery. CIP purchased laptops, software and scanners for the Probate and Family Court to allow judges to hear child welfare cases remotely during the pandemic.

In addition, CIP funds a full-time position with the Trial Court Department of Research and Planning, a Child Welfare Data Analyst, who develops dashboards designed to improve time to permanency. Dashboards are available to judges and clerks and can be used to improve case management and the timeliness of hearings. Examples include timeliness of permanency hearings, compliance with ICWA proceedings, timeliness of termination trials, and timeliness of adoptions and guardianships.

**How are you or how do you intend to monitor the progress of the project? (Phase V)**

*Be specific in terms of what type of evaluation (e.g., fidelity or outcome, comparison group, etc.) and what results you have, if any. If you have already evaluated your effort, how did you use these data to modify or expand the project?*

CAFL and Action 4 Children, which provided Child Safety training, used satisfaction surveys on-line at the end of each webinar to evaluate trainings and report back to CIP. Evaluation on the trainings were excellent. But for the pandemic, we would expect the number of care and protection filings and the time to permanency to decrease due to the Child Safety training. CIP continues to analyze the time to permanency and monitor the dashboard on attorney time to first appointment to gauge improvement on timely appointments, especially in western and central Massachusetts. In addition, CIP will measure the increase in qualified CAFL attorneys to determine the success of the Fellows program in western Massachusetts. The Child Welfare Data Analyst will provide CIP with data on the timeliness of permanency hearings as well as time to reunification, adoption, and guardianship. Improving timeliness measures will indicate success of the Pathways model. CIP will monitor distribution of the Custody Guide for Child Caregivers in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, as well as hits on the document on the CIP website. CIP will analyze data on time to completion of guardianship in Probate and Family Court through the



pilot projects compared to time to completion of guardianships without the distribution of the guide.

**Have there been notable factors that delayed or accelerated this effort?**

Court closings and virtual court hearings have impacted the quality of court hearings. Many cases have been continued due to court closings. Virtual hearings take longer to complete than in-person hearings. The pandemic has impacted the parent's ability to complete their action plans and the Department's ability to make reasonable efforts. This causes trials to be continued, and time to permanency to be delayed.

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

Assistance in developing a tool to evaluate the impact of the safety training on practice would be helpful.

**II. Trainings, Projects, and Activities** For questions 1-12, provide a *concise* description of work completed or underway to date in FY 2020 (October 2019-June 2020) in the below topical subcategories. For question 1, focus on significant training events or initiatives held or developed in FY 2020.

**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>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, training curriculum/program, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes</i>
Data	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Child welfare data analyst	1	Training curriculum; training program; coaching	Improve use of Tableau and welfare data.	<input type="checkbox"/> S <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> L <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> B <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Hearing quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Attorneys	4	webinars	Conduct virtual hearings.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Improving timeliness/permanency	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Lawyers and social workers	300	Series of 4 webinars	Improve timeliness and permanency thru understanding child safety criteria.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Quality legal representation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	CAFL staff, legal fellows		Curriculum/program	Increase number of attorneys in western MA and improve quality of representation statewide.	<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Engagement & participation of parties	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Social workers, lawyers, and judges	300	Webinar and conference	Develop cultural humility and improve racial equity.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Well-being	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Pre- and post-adoptive parents	80	Webinar	Stabilize placements placement.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Disparity/Disproportionality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Lawyers, social workers, judges	300+	Conference and webinar	Understand unconscious bias; examine ways to decrease disparity.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

<i>Topical Area</i>	<i>Did you hold or develop a training on this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, training curriculum/program, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes</i>
ICWA/Tribal collaboration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Lawyers, social workers	13	Webinar conference	Develop cultural humility and improve ICWA proceedings.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Sex Trafficking	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No					<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Normalcy/Reason. Prudent Parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No					<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Prevention	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Caregivers, attorneys, social workers	20	Webinar	Connect with community resources.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Safety	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Social workers, lawyers, judges	300	4 webinars	Reduce number of removals by incorporating SAFETY into decisions on removal.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Cultural Humility:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Social workers, Attorneys, Judges, School personnel	504	3 webinars	Develop cultural humility in your work. Preserve client's identity.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

On average, how many training events do you hold per year? This year, despite pandemic restrictions, CIP sponsored more than 20 virtual trainings.

What is your best prediction for the number of attorneys and judges that will participate in a training annually? 1,400+

The Family First Prevention Services Act amended the Social Security Act adding an eligibility criterion for the training of judges and attorneys on the congregate care provisions of the Act. See the highlighted portion below.

(1)<sup>1</sup> IN GENERAL.— In order to be eligible to receive a grant under this section, a highest State court ... *shall provide for the training of judges, attorneys, and other legal personnel in child welfare cases on Federal child welfare policies and payment limitations with respect to children in foster care who are placed in settings that are not a foster family home...*—

Have you been involved in planning with the agency on implementing Family First? ☐ Yes ☒ No  
If yes, please describe how the CIP has been involved.

Have you developed/been developing your Family First judicial training plan? ☒ Yes ☐ No  
If yes, please describe what you have done.

CIP Training Committee has reviewed the requirements of the QRTP hearing and examined bench cards and guides from other states. CIP staff has reached out to the Juvenile Court, CAFL and DCF to discuss developing an interdisciplinary QRTP training. CIP has met with the Trial Court Administrator to alert him to the requirements of the hearing. Discussions to develop a collaborative training are ongoing.

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<sup>1</sup> Sec. 50741(c) of P.L. 115-123 revised sec. 438(b)(1) to add language regarding training. Effective as if enacted on 1/1/18 (sec. 50746(a)(1) of P.L. 115-123).

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

Do you have a data project/activity? ☒ Yes ☐ No

<b>Project Description</b>	<b>How would you categorize this project?</b>	<b>Work Stage (if applicable)</b>
Timeliness of first-time attorney appointments: appointment of counsel to address efforts to improve the attorney shortage problem, shared with CPCS.	Data dashboards	Implementation
Regular sharing of Care and Protection and Child Requiring Assistance filings with both DCF and CAFL (CPCS).	Data dashboards	Evaluation/Assessment
Timeliness of judicial findings due on termination trials.	Data dashboards	Evaluation/Assessment
Review and adoption of CFSR data indicators: permanency in 12 months, 12 to 23 months, and 24+ months.	Use of AFCARS or CCWIS data	Identifying/Assessing Needs
Managing Care and Protection data dashboards: addressing data quality issues.	Data dashboards	Selecting Solution
Assessing Data Quality: Collecting race/ethnicity and gender information for children and parents to learn more about the communities we serve.	Case management systems	Selecting Solution

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

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

CIP utilizes reports to evaluate success of projects and to identify areas that need improvement, for example, backlogs in achieving permanency.

- 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

<b>Project Description</b>	<b>How would you categorize this project?</b>	<b>Work Stage (if applicable)</b>
Covid intervention: supporting virtual hearings	Process Improvements	Implementation
Development of dashboards to improve timely hearings	Process Improvements	Selecting Solution
<u>Custody Guide for Child Caregivers</u>	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 improvement in specific outcomes such as around reunification, guardianship, adoption or a focus on APPLA and older youth.

Do you have a timeliness or permanency project/activity? ☒ Yes ☐ No

<b>Project Description</b>	<b>How would you categorize this project?</b>	<b>Work Stage (if applicable)</b>
Differential Case Management Process	Continuances/Delays	Selecting Solution
Kinship Navigator	Guardianship	Implementation
Adoption: Call for Action	Adoption	Implementation
Dashboard development on permanency hearings	Continuances/Delays	Identify assess need

- 5. 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

<b>Project Description</b>	<b>How would you categorize this project?</b>	<b>Work Stage (if applicable)</b>
Cultural humility project	Youth Engagement	Evaluation/Assessment
Developing Custody Guide for Child Caregivers	Caregiver Engagement	Implementation
Providing Custody Guide in different languages	Caregiver Engagement	Implementation
Providing Guide differentiating Adoption and Guardianship in 5 different languages	Foster parent engagement	Implementation

- 6. Well-Being.** Well-being projects include any efforts related to improving the well-being of children and youth. Projects could focus on education, early childhood development, psychotropic medication, trauma, social network support, cultural connections, or other well-being related topics.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on well-being? ☒ Yes ☐ No

<b>Project Description</b>	<b>How would you categorize this project?</b>	<b>Work Stage (if applicable)</b>
Kinship Navigator	Social network supports	Implementation
Cultural Humility workshops	Cultural connections	Implementation
Trauma informed relational training for pre- and post-adoptive parents	Trauma	Evaluation/Assessment

- 7. Disparities/Disproportionalities.** These projects include any efforts related to improving equity in child welfare systems whether around race, sexual orientation or gender identity, national origin or immigration status, persons with disabilities, geographic or otherwise.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on disparities/disproportionalities? xx Yes ☐ No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Statewide virtual conference on racial equity in child welfare and juvenile justice	Race	Evaluation/Assessment
Cultural Humility webinars	Race	Implementation
Adoption Call to Action: increase adoption of non-white children and youth	Race	Implementation

- 8. ICWA/Tribal collaboration.** These projects could include any efforts to enhance state and tribal collaboration, state and tribal court agreements, data collection and analysis including of ICWA practice.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on ICWA or tribal collaboration? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Collaboration with DCF and ICWA coordinator on outreach to tribes on ICWA practice	Tribal Collaboration	Identifying/Assessing Needs
Training on ICWA practice including 9 attorneys and social workers to NICWA conference	Hearing Quality	Implementation
Developing ICWA dashboard	Data collection/assessment	Identifying/Assessing Needs

- 9. Preventing Sex Trafficking.** These projects could include work around domestic child sex trafficking, a focus on runaway youth, collaboration with other agencies around this topic, data collection and analysis, data sharing, or other efforts to fully implement these sections of the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act into practice.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on preventing sex trafficking/runaways? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.



Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

**10. Normalcy/Reasonable and Prudent Parent.** These projects could include any work around normalcy or the reasonable and prudent parent standard or practices, collaboration with other agencies around this topic, data collection and analysis, data sharing, or other efforts to fully implement these sections of the Preventing Sex and Strengthening Families Act into practice.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on normalcy/reasonable prudent parenting? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

**11. Prevention.** Prevention projects include work around preventing child maltreatment including primary prevention (preventing maltreatment from occurring in the first place), secondary, and tertiary prevention.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on prevention? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Kinship Navigator Program	Collaboration with other agencies	Implementation
Title IV E collaboration project to support pre-petition representation	Primary prevention	Selecting Solution
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

**12. Safety.** Safety projects are those that focus on decision-making around safety including decision-making practices in substantiation, removal, family time/visitation, and decisions about safety in out of home placements.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on safety? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Four webinars on ABA Child Safety Guide	Removal/Return	Evaluation/Assessment
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

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

1. Please describe how the CIP was involved with the state's CFSP due June 30, 2021.

a. Does the CFSP include any of the following:

- ☐ the CIP/Agency Joint Project
- ☐ the Hearing Quality Project
- ☐ the Legal Representation Project
- ☐ other judicial strategies
- ☐ other attorney strategies

If yes, please describe.

CIP and DCF continue to collaborate on a joint project, the Kinship Navigator program. CIP staff wrote a booklet for caregivers, geared towards those who file for guardianship in Probate and Family Court, Custody Guide for Child Caregivers, which the Kinship Navigator Program will help distribute. CIP also edited and printed a booklet for foster parents, Guardianship and Adoption, drafted by DCF and CAFL staff. Both of these valuable resources further the goal of the Kinship Navigator program, to connect kinship caregivers to resources, which includes resources about navigating the court process.

CIP continues to support the legal representation project, through ongoing conversations between DCF and CAFL, regarding drawing down Title IV-E funding.

CIP and DCF continue to work closely with the Juvenile Court to implement the Pathways initiative, launched in the winter of 2018-2019. With technical assistance provided by the National Center for State Courts, Pathways is designed to provide a forum for collaboration around permanency planning for children and youth in DCF custody. Through CIP, the Juvenile Court was able to hire a full-time coordinator of Pathways, who came on board in March 2020. The Pathways Coordinator scheduled county-wide virtual trainings which included judges, DCF attorneys, CAFL attorneys and both CAFL and DCF clinical staff in October 2020, December 2020, and February 2021. In FY22, the CIP funded Pathways Coordinator will continue to schedule trainings in additional counties tailored to the needs of each county, with a focus on elevating the level of practice in court and trial readiness. The trainings include judges, DCF attorneys and clinical staff, and CAFL attorneys and clinical staff.

2. 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 will invite a CIP representative to participate in the Title IV-E foster care eligibility review.
3. Please describe how the CIP was or will be involved in preparing and completing round 3 of the CFSR and PIP, if required, in your state.

CIP initiatives supported the work of the PIP which was completed.

The current version of the PIP includes (check all that apply): There is not a PIP

- ☐ the CIP/Agency Joint Project
- ☐ the Hearing Quality Project
- ☐ the Legal Representation Project
- ☐ other judicial strategies
- ☐ other attorney strategies

4. What strategies or processes are in place in your state that you feel are particularly effective in supporting joint child welfare program planning and improvement?

The CIP Steering Committee actively supports joint child welfare program planning and improvement. The Committee is comprised of individuals from the Juvenile Court, Probate and Family Court, Department of Children and Families, Committee for Public Counsel Services and the Court Improvement Program. The regular meetings of both the Steering Committee and Training subcommittee enable a dialogue to continue on a consistent and constant basis, so that joint trainings amongst stakeholders can be planned and executed as the current needs of judges, attorneys and clinical staff are identified.

In addition to the regular meetings which identify training needs, the Adoption Call to Action and Kinship Navigator, are effective joint child welfare projects, described more fully earlier in this assessment.

5. What barriers exist in your state that make effective joint child welfare program planning and improvement challenging? Data sharing. The Court, CAFL attorneys and DCF do not have the ability to adequately collect data about the court process in a robust way. This hampers joint child welfare program planning and improvement as it pertains to creating benchmarks to improve timeliness and therefore impacts making improvements in permanency for children.
6. 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? NO  
If yes, please provide a brief description of what is provided and how.

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

CIP and DCF continue to have discussions to explore utilizing professional partner training for judges, attorneys, and court personnel. A training was scheduled for attorneys, Juvenile Court judges and DCF staff for June 4, 2020, regarding the Department's Initial Placement Review (formerly "6 Week Review") process, however it was postponed due to the pandemic.

7. Have you talked with your agency about accessing Title IV-E funding for legal representation for parents or for children? YES.  
Is your state currently planning to seek or currently receiving reimbursement? If yes, describe any plans, approaches, or models that are under consideration or underway.  
Conversations between DCF and CAFL regarding drawing down Title IV-E funding are ongoing. One model under consideration is multi-disciplinary representation.

#### **IV. CQI Current Capacity Assessment**

1. Has your ability to integrate CQI into practice changed this year? If yes, what do you attribute the change to?  
With the hiring and training of our Child Welfare Data Analyst, CIP and the courts have been able to improve CQI.
2. Which of the following CBCC Events/Services have you/your staff engaged in this past year?
- ☐ Judicial Academy

- ☐ CQI Consult (*Topic:*\_\_\_\_\_)
- ☒ Virtual Evidence-Building Workshop
- ☒ Constituency Group - Data/Evaluation
- ☒ Constituency Group - Family First Prevention Services Act
- ☒ Constituency Group - Hearing Quality
- ☒ Constituency Group - ICWA
- ☒ Constituency Group - New Directors
- ☒ Constituency Group - Virtual Hearings/Court Processes
- ☒ Constituency Group - Other \_Quality Legal Representation, Reasonable Efforts, \_\_racial equity\_\_\_\_\_
- ☒ 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 data expertise
- ☐ CIP staff with evaluation expertise
- ☐ Consultants with CQI expertise
- ☐ a University partnership
- ☒ a statewide court case management system
- ☐ Contracts with external individuals or organizations to assist with CQI efforts
- ☐ Other resources:\_\_\_\_\_

**3a.** Do you record your child welfare court hearings? ☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes, are they ☒ audio ☐ video

**3b.** Can you remotely access your court case management system? *For example, Odyssey systems often allow remote access to case files.*

☐ Yes ☒ No

**3c.** What court case management software does your state use? If multiple, please indicate the most common:  
MassCourts which is an Oracle database.

**3d.** Have you employed any new technology or applications to strengthen your work?

\_\_\_Utilizing Tableau and dashboards

**4.** Please describe any continuity planning the CIP has led or has been involved in if not noted above.

Continuity planning includes prevention and recovery planning for threats such as public health crises, natural disasters, or cyber-attacks. This may include, for example, technology support for remote hearings or legal representation, developing guidance, coordinating with other agencies, or otherwise ensuring back-up approaches are in place to ensure needed services are able to continue.

CIP funded training for trainers on developing and participating in virtual hearings.

**5.** Considering the phases of change management and how you integrate these into practice, are there phases of the process (e.g., Phase I-need assessment, Phase II-theory of change) that you struggle with integrating more than others?

CIP struggles with: “Phase V-How do you intend to monitor the progress of the project? “

**6.** 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.)

CIP could use successful models on multi-disciplinary legal representation, pre- and post-filing of petition.

## 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 CQI Phases

**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.

**Paperwork Reduction Act**

Under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (P.L. 104-13), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Control Number. The OMB control number for this collection is 0970-0307 and it expires 11/30/2022. The estimated time to complete the CIP Complete Application is 92 hours