

Fourteenth Judicial District

PROGRESS REPORT CONCERNING PERMANENCY PLANNING IN DEPENDENCY & NEGLECT CASES RE: CHIEF JUSTICE DIRECTIVE 98-02

Submitted May 11, 2006

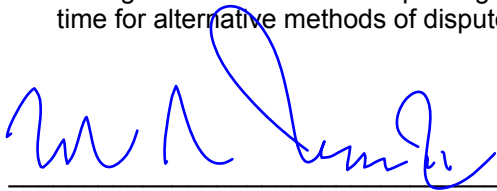
Pursuant to Chief Justice Directive 98-02, concerning permanency planning in dependency and neglect cases, please accept this report from the Fourteenth Judicial District.

The procedures for the processing of dependency and neglect cases in this District are consistent with the goals detailed in CJD98-02. Specifically:

- Permanency is considered by the court within twelve months of the shelter hearing or the filing of the petition.
- Permanent placement for dependent and neglected children is addressed within twelve months of the earliest:
 - * a judicial finding of abuse and neglect, or
 - * sixty days after a child's removal from the home.
- Our departments of social services, county attorneys, contract guardian ad litem, attorneys for respondent parents and judges have worked hard to develop an environment that is conducive to the timely resolution of these cases. Each recognizes their role in this process and vigorously pursues their respective responsibilities; at the same time, they are sensitive to the larger issues. They understand the need for timely resolution to these matters and cooperate to make the process work as effectively and efficiently as possible.
- Key processes are front-loaded (in part, pursuant to Chief Justice Directive 96-08), including:
 - * Early identification of needed services.
 - * Timely notification of parents and interested family members by requiring available respondents to provide this information immediately after preliminary protective proceedings.
 - * Early assessment and evaluation.
 - * Treatment plans within thirty days of preliminary protective proceedings. In some cases, an interim treatment plan is adopted at the shelter hearing.
 - * Alternative dispute resolution options such as family group decision-making utilized pre-adjudication, post-adjudication, and /or pre-termination. Other ADR tools, such as participation in the Expanded Family Option program and relinquishment counseling are being utilized in appropriate situations.
 - * Concurrent planning to allow alternative approaches to resolution without unnecessary delay.

Always receptive to new ideas, we are considering a variety of recommendations including:

- Setting a permanency planning hearing at the time of the preliminary protective proceeding to establish timelines.
- Setting a plea hearing forty-five days after the preliminary protective hearing rather than setting the matter for trial if a plea agreement is not reached after advisement. This will allow time for alternative methods of dispute resolution.



Michael A. O'Hara
Chief Judge