

## Legal Focus Group Feedback

Wednesday, May 12, 2004

- I. What we like:
  - A. Supervisors coming to court, especially Jennie Saelens and Karla Nelson.
    1. Reasons we like this:
      - a. A supervisor can address an issue right away because they are empowered decision makers.
      - b. Supervisors are extremely knowledgeable about cases
      - c. Workers do not appear to have the expertise to effectively present information to the court.
  - B. Frequent Case Reviews
    1. These are case specific, but can occur anywhere from once a week to once every two months. Again, depending on the situation, decision to be made, etc.
    2. Serves a vital purpose
      - a. Prevents stagnation
      - b. Helps to hold everyone accountable, including Children Services
      - c. Assists in making sure existing or planned services “fit” with family.
- II. Wishes
  - A. Caseworkers to “pre-plan” or anticipate the termination of a voluntary care agreement, thereby preventing an emergency request for hearing/custody.
  - B. Consider taking more voluntary agreements before requesting a hearing
  - C. When court sets a case for a 30 day review or assessment, children services would improve response time of when they actually get out to see the child/family. It seems as though in many of these circumstances, we wait until close to the court date to check things out, if we do at all.
  - D. Would not try to use a Delinquency hearing/review as a Children Services review. Court does not want to consider motions or orders that are not related to the delinquency cause of action. Please request a separate hearing.
  - E. More local foster homes

1. Doesn't like to have to request courtesy supervision of cases when a child is placed out of county.

F. Children Services could see more kids

1. Meaning, work with a larger population. Not in regards to face to face contact with existing families, court provides high praise in this area.
2. Work with older kids.

III. Other Topics

A. Discovery Process

1. Court understands that this is a very involved process
2. Supports a "Self-Serve" process, if it is possible
3. Court recognizes that you cannot simply have just anyone do this due to the sensitive material involved.

B. Continuances

1. Court does not like to have continuances any more than anyone else.
2. Many times, cause of continuance is due to information not being in order or all of the information provided properly.
3. See: *Issues with complaints*.

C. Advisory Board

1. Judge Williams does not feel it would be appropriate given his position to serve in this capacity.
2. Would not be opposed to having someone from his staff participate in this.

D. Court Liaison

1. No way this could work, unless it was Karla Nelson or Jennie Saelens.
2. Doesn't see how this person could possibly have all the information required for the hearing.
3. Court needs someone present who has the authority to make decisions.

### *Issues with Complaints*

1. When a father is “alleged” you must also request publication service for John Doe.
2. Must always include an alternative request, cannot simply request TCC, COPS, etc.
3. Always include a request for service with complaint.
4. Double check that you have a COMPLETE address (box number, apartment number, zip code, etc.)
5. For shelter care hearings, goal should be to arrive approximately one hour early, or at the very least, be on time.
6. Make sure all affidavits are notarized. Molly is not always in the office.