

CONFERENCE ON CHILD WELFARE AND THE COURTS

**Stronger
Together,
Uniting for
Children**



SEPTEMBER 27-29, 2023

Wilderness Resort, Wisconsin Dells

In-Person or Virtual

CONFERENCE INFORMATION

The Children's Court Improvement Program (CCIP) and the Department of Children and Families (DCF) invite you to attend the *2023 Conference on Child Welfare and the Courts: Stronger Together, Uniting for Children*. This free event will bring county, tribal, and state stakeholders together to advance sustainable solutions to improve the lives of children and families by building on their own strengths. The conference will highlight innovative child welfare practices from around the state and country.

DATES

Wednesday, September 27th

Thursday, September 28th

Friday, September 29th

LOCATION

Wilderness Resort

511 E. Adams St.

Wisconsin Dells, WI



VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE

Attendance for all conference presentations is also being offered virtually via live Zoom webinar. Virtual attendees may participate via monitored chat as each presentation allows. Due to logistical constraints, the county and tribal team meetings will not have the option to participate virtually.

REGISTRATION

There is no fee to attend. Advance registration is required to participate either in-person **or** virtually. Please register at the following link:

<https://go.wisc.edu/c1xh03>

In-person participants are highly encouraged to attend as a multidisciplinary team, with preference to: judicial officers, attorneys (prosecutors, adversary counsel, guardians ad litem), and child welfare directors and supervisors. Each county and tribe will have time to meet during the conference to develop strategies to implement in their community.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: August 27th

Registration is first-come, first-served. Please only register to attend in-person if you are able to attend the full conference. If registrations exceed available space, a wait list will be maintained. In order to keep this a free event, cancellations must be received at least two weeks in advance of the conference.

WORKSHOP PRACTICE AREAS



Judicial



Child Welfare



Legal



All Disciplines

CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDITS

Judicial Education credits, Continuing Legal Education (CLE) credits, and Continuing Education Hours (CEH) for social workers will be offered to attendees for in-person and live virtual attendance. Credit hour tracking and reporting for this event is the responsibility of individual attendees. Certificates of attendance will be provided to judicial officers only. Conference organizers will maintain sign-in sheets and virtual attendance logs for confirmation purposes. Any questions regarding reporting of credits may be directed to CCIP at the contact information below.

CONFERENCE MATERIALS

Conference materials will be provided to attendees in electronic format only. These materials will be made available prior to the conference in the Whova app. Additional information and instructions will be sent to the email address provided as part of your registration.

LODGING

A hotel room block has been established with Wilderness Resort at the state rate. In-person registrants will receive instructions regarding how to secure lodging reservations along with their registration confirmation. Please do not make reservations without first receiving and reviewing this information. Reservations must be made prior to August 27th to receive the discounted rate.

QUESTIONS



Please contact Justin Wolff at justin.wolff@wicourts.gov or (608) 266-1557 or Bridget Mauerman at bridget.mauerman@wicourts.gov or (608) 267-1958.

AGENDA AT A GLANCE

Wednesday, September 27th

8:00 AM - 9:00 AM	Breakfast and Registration
9:00 AM - 9:15 AM	Welcome
9:15 AM - 10:15 AM	<i>Hope Rising</i>
10:15 AM - 10:30 AM	Break
10:30 AM - 11:45 AM	Workshop A
11:45 AM - 12:45 PM	Lunch
12:45 PM - 2:00 PM	Workshop B
2:00 PM - 2:15 PM	Break
2:15 PM - 3:15 PM	<i>A Public Health Approach to Children and Youth Mental Health Services</i>
3:15 PM - 3:45 PM	<i>Putting Families First: Updates on the Child Welfare Transformation</i>
3:45 PM - 4:00 PM	Setting the Stage for Team Meetings
4:00 PM - 5:00 PM	County and Tribal Team Meetings
5:00 PM - 6:30 PM	Networking Reception

Thursday, September 28th

8:00 AM - 9:00 AM	Breakfast
9:00 AM - 9:15 AM	Announcements
9:15 AM - 10:15 AM	<i>A Path to Well-Being</i>
10:15 AM - 10:30 AM	Break
10:30 AM - 11:45 AM	Workshop C
11:45 AM - 12:45 PM	Lunch
12:45 PM - 1:45 PM	County and Tribal Team Meetings
1:45 PM - 3:00 PM	Workshop D
3:00 PM - 3:15 PM	Break
3:15 PM - 4:15 PM	<i>Healing-Centered Engagement</i>
4:15 PM - 4:30 PM	Closing Remarks

Friday, September 29th

8:00 AM - 9:00 AM	Breakfast
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM (with break)	Seminar Sessions (Optional)

8:00 AM - 9:00 AM

Registration and Breakfast (provided)

9:00 AM - 9:15 AM

Welcome

Hon. Bennett Brantmeier – Jefferson County Circuit Court

Brent Ruehlow – Jefferson County Department of Human Services

9:15 AM - 10:15 AM

Hope Rising

Christopher Freeze – Hope Science Institute of Mississippi

Discover how the sciences of trauma, trust, and hope are key to impactful changes in one's life. Learn how Hope Science can best be implemented in agencies, organizations, and by individuals.

10:15 AM - 10:30 AM

Break

10:30 AM - 11:45 AM

Workshop A

11:45 AM - 12:45 PM

Lunch (provided)

12:45 PM - 2:00 PM

Workshop B

2:00 PM - 2:15 PM

Break

2:15 PM - 3:15 PM

The Future of Mental Health: Financing Justice and Equity Schools and Child Serving Systems

Alex Briscoe – California Children's Trust

The pandemic had the effect of highlighting and exacerbating an issue which had already been present and growing, that is the children and youth mental health crisis. The need to allocate resources and focus more on the well-being of children is now more clear than ever. Mr. Briscoe will share the outcomes and transformation occurring in the world of children and youth mental health.

3:15 PM - 3:45 PM

Putting Families First: Updates on the Child Welfare Transformation

Department of Children and Families

Learn about the status of Putting Families First in Wisconsin. Over the last few years, Wisconsin has embarked on a journey to dramatically reduce the number of children in out-of-home care. This session will focus on the progress made over the past few years, preview future efforts and discuss the important role that all stakeholders have in improving outcomes for children and families.

3:45 PM - 4:00 PM

Setting the Stage for Team Meetings

4:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Team Meetings

5:00 PM - 6:30 PM

Networking Reception

WORKSHOP SESSION A

Wednesday, September 27th

10:30 AM - 11:45 AM



Judicial

- A-1 *Wisconsin Collaborations: Tailored Dispositional Orders & Judicial Engagement Teams*
Children's Court Improvement Program
Department of Children and Families
Project Site Stakeholders

The Children's Court Improvement Program and the Department of Children and Families will provide an overview of the Tailored Dispositional Orders Project, which is now available to all counties. Attendees will hear from participants in the project about changes made to their CHIPS conditions. Additionally, CCIP will share the Judicial Engagement Team (JET) initiative that has been implemented in 10 counties. Attendees will learn what counties have accomplished through the JET initiative and the benefit of having a multi-disciplinary child welfare group within their county.



Legal

- A-2 *Tips for Attorneys in Child Welfare Cases: Work Smarter not Harder in Advocating for the Whole Child through Collaboration*
Matthew Giesfelt - State Public Defender's Office
Eve Dennison Pollock - W.R. Stewart & Assoc., S.C.
Deanna Weiss - Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee

While we operate in an adversarial system, our ethical duties to our clients (the best interests of a child, the best interests of the public, a child, or a parent) may not always demand conflict. Breaking down common walls and barriers between parties to find common ground may be an effective practice to achieve the best outcomes for our clients and for our cases, generally. A panel will discuss how ethical duties may permit collaboration to achieve effective results for respective clients in child welfare litigation, while centering the focus around the holistic needs of the child.



Child
Welfare

- A-3 *Essential Strategies for Transforming Youth Mental Health Services and Systems: Expanding Provider Classes*
Alex Briscoe - California Children's Trust

Alex Briscoe will provide practical ideas to help break the barriers to care for Wisconsin's children, youth, and their families. Mr. Briscoe and his team have been leading the effort to make a paradigm shift in how to conceptualize, deliver, and fund a system of care to address children's social, emotional, developmental, and mental health supports and services to a whole family-community approach. Together with community-based providers and advocates, they are partnering to confront systemic failures, institutional racism, and social inequities in the behavioral health and child serving systems.



All
Disciplines

- A-4 *Hope Rising*
Christopher Freeze - Hope Science Institute of Mississippi

This interactive workshop walks participants through the application of hope in their work place and in their personal life. It includes the connection of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the Science of Hope. Participants will utilize the Adult Hope Scale and Goal-Setting worksheets.

- A-5 *Understanding Statements of Children and Forensic Interviewing in Wisconsin*
Lynn Cook - Wisconsin Department of Justice

Decisions made in child maltreatment cases can be extremely complex. Having complete information about what children know and what their statements mean in the context of their experiences reduces erroneous outcomes and provides peace of mind when making decisions around child safety, placement, and offender consequences. Informed by 40 years of research and practice, participants will gain a foundational understanding about how children develop memories, what factors influence the amount and quality of the information they will be able to provide about their experiences, and how forensic interviewers across our state are being trained to elicit accurate information.

WORKSHOP SESSION B

Wednesday, September 27th

12:45 PM - 2:00 PM



- B-1 *Getting the Most Out of Court-Ordered Evaluations*
Dr. Claire Patterson - Neuropsychological Associates
Robin Gray - RISE Wisconsin

This session will focus on processes to get the best result when ordering evaluations. Topics will include different types of evaluations and the scope of concerns that each can address, bias in the evaluation process, tips for getting the most out of evaluations to best inform treatment planning and placement decisions, how to prepare individual/families for the evaluation process, and how to set up an efficient and informed referral system.



- B-2 *Family Legal Advocacy & Supports Project (FLAS): A Multidisciplinary Approach to Preventing Formal CPS Involvement*
MayChee Yang - Department of Children and Families
Cary Bloodworth - University of Wisconsin Law School

FLAS is a pilot program focusing on prevention efforts through civil legal advocacy and supportive services to families. This workshop includes an overview of FLAS and insight learned after a year of implementation, specifically how its multidisciplinary approach and services work toward preventing the removal of children from their homes and deeper child welfare involvement with families.



- B-3 *Transforming Child Welfare into a Child and Family Well-Being System - Parents Supporting Parents in Wisconsin*
Kat Kosmaule - Department of Children and Families
Jefferson County Parents Supporting Parents Program

Partnering with parents and youth who have experienced the child welfare system is essential in helping to transform the support families receive. Wisconsin's Parents Supporting Parents model is an evidence-based model aimed at empowering parents with lived child welfare experience as mentors to parents currently within the child welfare system. Hear from parents who are leading the way in building a child welfare system that promotes family well-being.



- B-4 *Seeing is Believing and Believing is Seeing: Thinking About Tribal Sovereignty*
Paul Stenzel - Hansen & Hildebrand, SC

Paul Stenzel, a Wisconsin lawyer with nearly 30 years of experience working with Indian tribes in Wisconsin and the upper Midwest, presents his perspectives on tribes, government-to-government relations and the Indian Child Welfare Act. Attendees will learn about the rationale for the Act, as well as how it supports the sovereign ability of tribes to self-govern and maintain their culture and political standing.

- B-5 *Safety Revisions Project*
Safety Revisions Team - Department of Children and Families

Revisions to the safety planning process aim to engage families early in the child protective services (CPS) safety assessment process, gather rich information about their family to inform understanding of safety and address the impacts of implicit biases and systems of oppression. Come explore improvements to the process that's at the heart of keeping Wisconsin's children safe.

8:00 AM - 9:00 AM

Breakfast (provided)

9:00 AM - 9:15 AM

Announcements

9:15 AM - 10:15 AM

A Path to Well-Being

[Dr. Anne Farrell - Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago](#)

Our national child welfare priorities include safety, permanency, and well-being. Because getting there means putting families first, it's more than aspiration, it's necessity. Well-being can seem like an elusive ideal; still, it is an outcome that requires our best efforts. The pathway there requires a fundamental reorientation from the traditional, more reactive approaches that have long characterized our child protection systems. This presentation includes a discussion of approaches to prevention and early intervention and aligns them with current research, policy, practice, and innovations in child welfare, acknowledging the structural, economic, and social factors that place families at lifelong disadvantage and challenge our ability to support their resilience and well-being outcomes.

10:15 AM - 10:30 AM

Break

10:30 AM - 11:45 AM

Workshop C

11:45 AM - 12:45 PM

Lunch (provided)

12:45 PM - 1:45 PM

Team Meetings

1:45 PM - 3:00 PM

Workshop B

3:00 PM - 3:15 PM

Break

3:15 PM - 4:15 PM

Healing-Centered Engagement

[Dr. Farima Pour-Khorshid - University of San Francisco](#)

Healing-Centered Engagement is an asset-based and culturally-rooted approach to healing and well-being for young people of color and their adult allies. It addresses trauma using healing-centered practices and principles. Learn how we as the adults can support children and youth in their healing.

4:15 PM - 4:30 PM

Closing Remarks

[Hon. Bennett Brantmeier - Jefferson County Circuit Court](#)

[Brent Ruehlow - Jefferson County Department of Human Services](#)

WORKSHOP SESSION C

Thursday, September 28th

10:30 AM - 11:45 AM



Judicial

C-1

Family Treatment Courts in Wisconsin

Heather Kierzek - Office of Court Operations (Facilitator)

Dunn County Family Treatment Court

Milwaukee County Healthy Infant Court

Rock County Family Recovery Court

Wisconsin has implemented several child welfare specialty courts throughout the state, including the Dunn County Family Treatment Court, Milwaukee County Healthy Infant Court, and Rock County Family Recovery Court. Learn from innovations developed in these courts to create better paths to permanency, child well-being, and family engagement using evidence-based procedures and trauma-informed decisions. The presenters will share an overview of each program, successes, challenges, and any advice for other counties considering starting a Family Treatment Court.



Legal

C-2

Representing Best Interests in Volatile Times (Attorney Ethics Credit)

Hon. Bennett Brantmeier - Jefferson County Circuit Court

Alaina Fahley - State Public Defender's Office

Aviva Kaiser - State Bar of Wisconsin

Megan Stoltz - Stoltz Hendrickson, LLC

Tiffany Highstrom - Stafford Rosenbaum, LLP

With more division inside and outside the courtroom and the continued challenges of the pandemic, representing children or adults in highly charged court proceedings seems more challenging now than ever. This workshop will provide information on: identifying safety concerns and other red flags when representing parties, determining when and how these concerns should be addressed or brought to the court's attention, examining ethical questions in cases involving concerning behavior in an ongoing case, and learning to juggle self-care, responsiveness, and appropriate advocacy.



Child
Welfare

C-3

Family Keys: Using Innovation Across Sectors to Keep Families Together

Dustin Koury - Department of Children and Families

Learn about the collaborative approach between county child welfare agencies, law enforcement, and other local and state partners to keep families stably housed. This workshop will show that innovation in how child welfare intersects with other agencies can prevent unnecessary removals, return youth to their families sooner, and offer cost savings to the broader community.



All
Disciplines

C-4

Healing-Centered Racial Affinity

Dr. Farima Pour-Khorshid - University of San Francisco

Dr. Pour-Khorshid will build upon her plenary presentation; introducing participants to healing-centered engagement, an approach that honors the complex experiences of people and centers on collective healing and well-being.

C-5

Collaboration in the Service of Better Systems for Children and Youth: A Community Capacity Approach

Dr. Anne Farrell - Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago

Healthy relationships are a source of resilience through life's journey. Taking a community capacity approach to responding to families in the child welfare system capitalizes on family strengths and mobilizes informal and formal community assets. Dr. Farrell will outline ways community capacity is constructed, maintained, and sustained, including forms of prevention and intervention.

WORKSHOP SESSION D

Thursday, September 28th

1:45 PM – 3:00 PM



Judicial

D-1 *Putting Parent Peer Support into Systems for Change*

Kat Kosmaule - Department of Children and Families

Rock County Parents Supporting Parents Panel

Peer parent programs provide child welfare involved families a unique opportunity to connect with parents who have successfully navigated the child welfare system and who have shared similar experiences. Hear from participants in various roles about how this is being implemented in Wisconsin.



Legal

D-2 *Human-Centered Lawyering: Using a Compassion-Based Framework to Better Understand and Connect with Families in the Child Protections System*

Vivek Sankaran and Bridgette Carr - University of Michigan Law School

Attorneys can play an important role in helping families feel connected to the systems trying to serve them. This discussion-based session will explore how compassion can be used as a framework for building that trust and engagement with families. We'll start by exploring the values each of us brings to the work, then learn about compassion, the science behind it, and how it plays out in practice. Then we'll shift to an exercise on seeing the world through the perspectives of the families before us and end with a conversation on how we can build courtrooms of compassion, which begins by exercising the muscle of self-awareness. This will be a highly interactive session with guided reflections and small group conversations. Consider it a chance to step back, reflect on our work, and think about how we can all better serve families.



Child
Welfare

D-3 *Applying the Comprehensive Framework to Improve Outcomes for All Families Affected By Substance Use Disorders and Child Welfare Involvement*

Alexis Balkey and Arielle Andres - Children and Family Futures

The comprehensive framework, developed over several decades of experience working with hundreds of collaborative partnerships serving families, offers a set of proven policy and practice strategies for communities and states to implement to improve outcomes for families affected by substance use disorders (SUDs). This presentation will provide an overview of the framework as well as key positive outcomes demonstrated through several multisite evaluations of innovative programs that serve these families. Presenters will offer concrete examples of how local and state collaboratives can embed these practices into the substance use disorder treatment, child welfare, and court systems to improve outcomes, with equity, for all families affected by substance use.



All
Disciplines

D-4 *Truancy: Wisconsin Statutes and Best Practice Approaches*

Julie Incitti - Department of Public Instruction

Alana Peck - Department of Children and Families

Attendance improvement starts with improvements to policy and practice at the systems level. Collaboration is essential between students, families, school staff, youth justice, child welfare, the courts, district attorneys, and community partners. Effective solutions draw on a continuum of supports that are matched to identified needs and use a trauma sensitive, youth-centered, non-punitive approach.

D-5 *Drug-Endangered Children: An Approach to Identification and Response*

Dr. Hillary Petska - Children's Wisconsin

Substance use disorders (SUD) are a significant public health problem in the United States. Children with caregivers affected by SUD are at increased risk of negative health consequences. This presentation will cover strategies to identify drug-endangered children and promote positive outcomes.

8:00 AM - 9:00 AM

Breakfast (provided)

9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
(with break)**Seminar Sessions***S-1: The Most Consequential of Acts: The Nuances of TPR Practice***Hon. Christopher Foley (ret.) - Milwaukee County Circuit Court**

This session will provide an in-depth, practice-oriented look at the termination of parental rights (TPR) process from filing to disposition. This interactive session will be led by an experienced judge and former GAL, child welfare prosecutor, and parent's attorney, as they share their knowledge and guidance regarding publicly-filed TPR cases. The presenters will share practical insights on both the foundational statutory provisions and important case law surrounding TPR, as well as more nuanced analysis of how all stakeholders may provide the highest level of representation and oversight in these high-stakes cases.

*S-2: Applying the Family Treatment Court Best Practice Standards: Lessons from Practitioners***Alexis Balkey and Arielle Andrews - Children and Family Futures****Barron County Family Drug Treatment Court****Brown County Family Recovery Court****Milwaukee County Family Drug Treatment Court**

After more than 25 years of practice experience and research, Best Practice Standards (BPS) have been established to help enhance and sustain effective Family Treatment Courts (FTCs). BPS and tools can be used to improve outcomes for all children, parents, and families affected by substance use disorders. This session provides information on how to apply specific provisions within the BPS, as well as Wisconsin examples showing how these standards have been incorporated into practice. Attendees will learn how FTCs create lasting systems change to improve outcomes for families in the four dimensions of recovery: health, home, community, and purpose. Presenters will share how teams use the BPS to help families break generational cycles of substance use, abuse, and neglect; promoting healthy, stable home environments where children can thrive.

*S-3: Human-Centered Organizations: Using Organizational Practices to Uplift Individual Well-Being and Resiliency***Vivek Sankaran and Bridgette Carr - University of Michigan Law School**

Organizational culture has a big impact on whether individuals within the organization thrive or languish. This hands-on session will explore how organizations can create positive cultures to improve well-being. Additionally, this session will explore practices individuals or small groups can adopt to improve well-being and resilience regardless of the broader organizational culture. Ideally, participants in this session will leave with concrete tools to implement in their own professional lives and to share with their colleagues.

*S-4: Parents Supporting Parents Institute***Parents Supporting Parents - Eau Claire, Jefferson, Milwaukee, and Rock Counties**

Parents Supporting Parents is an evidence-based model aimed at empowering parents with lived child welfare experience as mentors to parents currently within the child welfare system. This presentation will demonstrate how peer support can increase engagement, link families to services, reduce re-entry into out-of-home care, and develop an effective infrastructure to support families across disciplines.