

January 2025

DEPENDENCY ROTATION JUDICIAL SUPPORT GUIDE

*FOR SUPERIOR COURT JUDICIAL OFFICERS HEARING
CHILD DEPENDENCY CASES*

*Administrative Office of the Courts
FAMILY & YOUTH JUSTICE PROGRAMS*



WASHINGTON
COURTS
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

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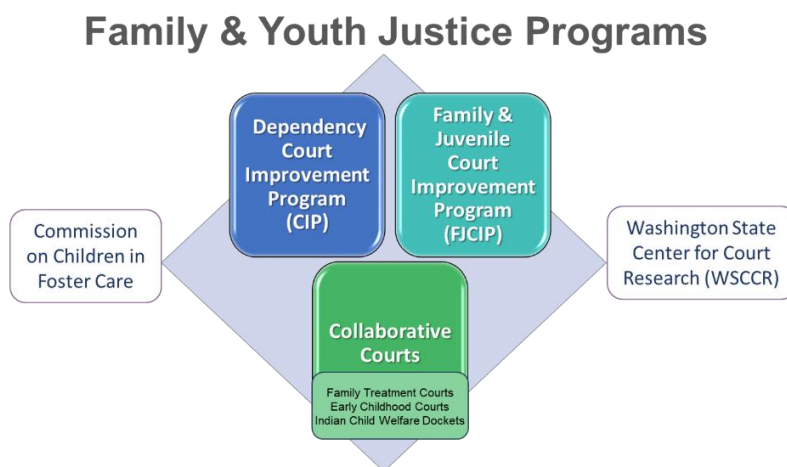
INTRODUCTION

Entering a child dependency rotation can be both challenging and deeply rewarding for Washington State judicial officers. Dependency cases involve issues of abuse, neglect, and parental rights, demanding careful consideration of both legal standards and the best interests of the child. These cases require a unique understanding of complex family dynamics, statutory frameworks, and the sensitive needs of children and families involved in the child welfare system. Presiding over these cases is a significant responsibility that requires judicial officers to balance legal precision with the realities of family dynamics and child welfare.

This guide is designed to provide practical and valuable resources, tools, and training that help judicial officers navigate this critical area of the law. By equipping you with necessary resources and knowledge, this guide aims to help you make informed, compassionate decisions that prioritize the best interests of children while balancing the rights and responsibilities of all parties.

FAMILY & YOUTH JUSTICE PROGRAMS

The Administrative Office of the Courts' Family & Youth Justice Programs (FYJP) focuses on improving outcomes for families and youth involved in the child welfare system by provide training, technical assistance, resources, and support to judicial officers, court staff, and system partners working on dependency cases. We offer a multitude of opportunities designed to help judicial officers navigate the complexities of dependency cases and empower them to make informed, legally sound decisions that prioritize the well-being of children, youth, and families. By fostering cross-system collaboration and promoting equity and evidence-informed approaches, FYJP aims to enhance equity, collaboration, and effective decision-making within Washington State's dependency court system.



Visit our website
<http://www.wacita.org>

TRAINING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Below are some of the most popular trainings, resources, and tools used by dependency court judicial officers.

i For a complete list of training and technical assistance provided by Family & Youth Justice Programs please click the link below:

<https://www.wacita.org/training-and-technical-assistance-flyer/>

Dependency Judicial Training Academy

Every spring, FYJP hosts a multi-day, virtual conference for judicial officers and court administrators who hear child dependency cases from Superior Courts, Tribal Courts, State Courts of Appeals, and the Washington State Supreme Court. Each year, the academy is co-designed with judicial officers from across the state.



→ [Register for the 2025 Dependency Judicial Training Academy](#)

Judicial Community of Practice Series

The Judicial Community of Practice (JCoP) is a monthly, virtual peer-learning opportunity for judicial officers who hear child dependency cases. JCoP sessions are led by one of our expert [Jurists-in-Residence](#), who are retired judicial officers with years of experience hearing child dependency cases. The sessions are topic-focused and include a [Dependency Practice Tip](#) that is sent out prior to each session. JCoP creates a confidential space for judicial officers to freely engage in discussion, ask questions, and receive support – which is why sessions are never recorded.

→ [Register or the 2025 Series](#)

Dependency 101 for Judicial Officers

The [Dependency 101 for Judicial Officers Course](#) is designed to facilitate the delivery of quality, interactive, on-demand virtual trainings that examine the information, practices, and skills judicial officers need to effectively preside over child abuse and neglect cases in Washington State. The modules in this course examine the essential principles of dependency court systems and judicial decision-making that ensure safety, due process, timeliness, permanency, and well-being for children and families.

Module 1: Introduction to Child Dependency*	Overview of the background, purpose, and structure of the child dependency court system in Washington State. <i>(120 minutes)</i>	View
Module 2: Safety Framework*	Application of the safety framework contained in the American Bar Association’s publication, Child Safety: A Guide for Judges and Attorneys in child dependency cases. <i>(60 minutes)</i>	View
Module 3: Shelter Care	Reviews the Shelter Care law and process in Washington State. <i>(60 minutes)</i>	View
Module 4: Fact-Finding	Reviews the fact-finding hearing law and process in Washington State. <i>(60 minutes)</i>	View

* CJE credit available

Recorded Webinars

Keeping Families Together Act (HB 1227)	Statutory Overview of the Keeping Families Together Act <i>(70 minutes)</i>	View
	Keeping Families Together Act Fishbowl Conversation <i>(60 minutes)</i>	View
	Safety Planning in Action <i>(90 minutes)</i>	View
	Kin-First Culture <i>(60 minutes)</i>	View

High Potency Synthetic Opioids (SB 6109)*	Understanding State Public Health Guidance on High-Potency Synthetic Opioids <i>(60 minutes)</i>	View
Harms of Removal and Family Separation	There's No Place Like Home: Understanding the Harm of Removal in Child Welfare <i>(90 minutes)</i>	View
Family Time Visitation (HB 1194)	Strengthening Parent-Child Visits During Child Welfare Proceedings <i>(60 minutes)</i>	View

* CJE credit available

iDecide

iDecide is an interactive, web-based tool designed to guide judicial officers through key inquiries that must be made during Shelter Care Hearings. This tool resulted from an intensive, cross-system collaborative project that included judicial officers, attorneys (for the state, parents & youth), DCYF staff, child advocates, community services providers, and individuals with lived child welfare experience as parents or youth. While iDecide aligns with current law, it does not replace the law. Instead, the iDecide tool helps judicial officers make informed decisions and navigate the complexities of dependency court proceedings. iDecide contains links to additional resources and trainings, including the Legal Standards Comparison Chart and interactive Harm of Removal Map.

→ [Go to iDecide](#)

Non-Offender Juvenile Benchbook

The Non-Offender Juvenile Benchbook outlines the state and federal statutory requirements for judicial officers hearing cases involving the welfare of children. The Benchbook contains topical sections as well as statutory and case law citations, including hyperlinks. The first iteration of the Benchbook was published in 2011. While select chapters have been updated since that time, many of the chapters are awaiting revision. FYJP is actively working with a legal advisory group to prioritize updates of the Benchbook in 2025.

FYJP supports peer learning from courts in the FJCIP Court Community and around the state. We encourage you to reach out to other dependency judicial officers and see how their courts function.

→ [Go to Benchbook](#)

VIRTUAL COURT OBSERVATIONS


Providing new and returning judicial officers opportunities to observe dependency court dockets in other counties offers valuable insights into diverse legal practices and procedural approaches. It provides an opportunity to identify best practices and innovative solutions for handling complex cases more effectively. Additionally, cross-county observation promotes consistency and collaboration across jurisdictions, enhancing the overall quality of judicial decision-making in dependency cases. The below courts have volunteered to allow other judicial officers to virtually observe their dependency dockets.

County	Docket Day/Time	Contact Information
Clark	<p>Tuesday Docket: all reviews and motions</p> <p>Thursday/Friday Docket: initial shelter care hearings, fact finding trials, and special set motions or dispositions.</p> <p>All use the same dependency zoom link.</p>	<p>Julie Christian, FJCIP Coordinator julie.m.christian@clark.wa.gov</p> <p>Stefanie Ellis, Court Commissioner stefanie.ellis@clark.wa.gov</p>
Kitsap	Monday and Wednesday	<p>To request to view Kitsap County Dependency dockets, please email and indicate you are a judicial officer requesting to observe the court. They will get you calendar information and Zoom information.</p> <p>jlrobison@co.kitsap.wa.us</p> <p>https://www.kitsap.gov/sc/Pages/remoteppearance.aspx</p>
Pierce	Monday - Friday	<p>Sally Mednansky, FJCIP Coordinator sally.mednansky@piercecountywa.gov</p>
<p><i>Any courts willing to host onboarding judicial officers to observe your court hearings, please contact Jenn Nguyen at Jennifer.nguyen@courts.wa.gov</i></p>		

JUDICIAL WELLNESS

Dependency court judicial officers make tough decisions on a daily basis that have temporarily or permanently impacts on the lives of children, families and communities. As a result of this immense responsibility, judicial officers experience high rates of chronic stress which may lead or contribute to anxiety, depression, alcohol/substance abuse, and mental health issues. FYJP is here to help connect judicial officers to needed support and assistance.

Judicial Assistance Services Program (JASP)	JASP offers help from trained judicial officers, at no cost, and referrals to confidential professional help.	View
Jurist-in-Residence (JIR) Program	Jurists-in-Residence are retired, FYJP-contracted judges that can mentor judicial officers hearing dependency cases by providing guidance on navigating cases, court processes, docket management, and cross-system collaborative teams.	View
NCJFCJ Monday Morning Moments	Virtual webinars that promote judicial well-being and help develop strategies to mitigate the impact of stress that is inherent in the work.	View
Other Resources	Apps Podcasts Videos Workplace Activities Quick Tools (Colorado)	



Check out FYJP’s Judicial Wellness website page
<https://www.wacita.org/judicial-wellness/>

RESOURCES FOR HEARINGS

- [Shelter Care Findings Log](#) (Clark County)
- [HB 1227 Hearing Script](#) (Clark County)
- [Scripts for Common Dependency Hearings](#) (Clark County)
- [Dependency Fact-Finding Cheat Sheet](#) (Clark County)
- [ICWA Questions](#) (Spokane County)
- [Parent Information Form for Shelter Care](#) (Thurston County)
- [Parent Information Form for Dependency Cases](#) (Thurston County)
- [Shelter Care Court Observation Form](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Common Acronyms in Dependency](#) (Clark County)
- [Dependency Case Flowchart](#) (Clark County)
- [Dependency Timeliness Cheat Sheet](#) (Clark County)
- [HB 1227 Outline](#) (Clark County)
- [WA Guide on Reasonable & Active Efforts](#)
- [Lummi Child Welfare Comprehensive Guide to Active Efforts](#)
- [Findings of Fact in Dependency and Termination Cases](#)
- [American Bar Association's Child Safety Guide](#)
- [DCYF Office Map](#)
- [DCYF Policies](#)
- [DCYF Permanency Matrix](#)
- [Parents for Parents \(P4P\) Information Flyer](#)



For questions on the training, resources, and support that FYJP has available for judicial officers please contact Laura Vogel, Training Coordinator, at laura.vogel@courts.wa.gov