

Court Improvement Subcommittee Meeting  
February 26, 2007

In Attendance

Deb House  
Stacy Miller  
Linda O'Neal  
Rae Ann Seay  
Chris Zawisza  
Rory Alley

In the February meeting of the Training and Education Subcommittee members made the suggestion to put a court icon on the CJA/JTF website to act as a link to attending and presenting. Court Improvement Subcommittee members recommended that Leslie Kinkaid or Jessica Hooper of the Administrative Office of the Court be contacted in order to determine if their preexisting icon could be used for that purpose. They noted that activities of the courts related to children's justice could also be linked under that icon. UT staff will contact Jessica or Leslie to pursue this issue.

The Guardian ad Litem guidelines were previously developed to provide a framework for use of any group working in children's justice. In this meeting subcommittee members discussed how to proceed with its implementation or use within the state. Three areas Memphis, Nashville and Knoxville, were proposed as pilot sites. Rae Ann Seay spoke for the Middle Tennessee region concerning this project and said legal aid is interested in proceeding with this project but needs a partner to help initiate it. She expressed that it was on hold at this time because proposed partner Vanderbilt University was not in a position to be a law school partner due to recent staff and legal changes. Chris Zawisza indicated that this project is on hold in the Memphis area as well because their general counsel is bringing more attorneys on board and the Memphis area CAC and Legal Center are currently working on other items. Chris will be meeting with the Knoxville region in the next week to ask about their involvement in this project and will pass that information along to the subcommittee members. It was agreed to put this item on the agenda for the next Joint Task Force meeting to involve the entire group in its inertia. Rae Ann and Chris Zawisza will update the group on how their regions would like to move forward with the project at that time.

As part of the 2007 Tennessee Child Abuse State Plan, subcommittee members expressed an interest in working on a project concerning guidelines for children's appearances and testimony in court. They proposed a survey instrument to address court issues pertaining to children waiting to appear in court, children's avoidance of appearance in court, and consideration of children's testimony. Members noted that it would be helpful if anyone knew of a law student that was interested in helping with this project. In order to garner information for a survey to address these issues, members will look at what Tennessee is

currently doing towards those practices and begin accumulating existing material on this subject to collect questions concerning what courts “should” be doing in those instances. UT Staff will view the ABA center for Children and Law website to see what resources may be available there and will obtain a copy of the American Bar Association’s publication, “Working with courts and Child Protection” to disseminate to subcommittee members. Stacy Miller will make copies of chapter 15 in the National Association for Children Redbook to be mailed to members for review and discussion at the next subcommittee meeting. Chris Zawisza will obtain child witness material from “Children in the Courtroom: Challenges for Lawyers and Judges” a publication by the National Institute of Child Advocacy to be distributed to subcommittee members. Members will also check the Tennessee Councils August meeting for material related to this topic

The committee decided to defer the issue of improving or developing court involvement in the CPIT process to a later meeting in order to proceed with the aforementioned tasks.

The next scheduled conference call meeting for this group is April 23, 2007 at 3:00pm.