



STATE COURT ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE

Summary of testimony by Megan Kearsley, Coordinator for the Court Improvement Program, to Colorado's Child Welfare System Interim Study Committee on June 27, 2023

The State Court Administrator's Office serves as the central office for the state court system, support more than 300 judges and 4,000 staff who serve in every county of the state.

- Child welfare cases are classified as Dependency and Neglect (D&N) cases.
- In 2022, 2,245 D&N cases were filed across the state. 1,409 of those involve children 6 and under and have different statutory timeframes and requirements.
- Cases are filed by counties in instances when the county determines that court involvement is necessary.
- The Court Improvement Program is a federal-funded program that develops and implements a plan for child welfare system improvement, specifically D&Ns. Generally, the Children's Bureau is focused on efforts to improve court data, timeliness and quality of permanency, engagement of parties, Indian Child Welfare Act compliance and tribal collaboration, foster care prevention, safety decision-making and equity.
 - The CIP Strategic Plan includes opportunities for multidisciplinary training and judicial education.
 - It also includes working with multidisciplinary Best Practice Court Teams at the local level to identify strategies and interventions for court improvement.
- This is achieved through a multidisciplinary taskforce and in Colorado is considered a Supreme Court Committee.
- All CIPs follow a federal program instruction mandating they engage in 3 projects areas:
 - Improving quality legal representation for children, parents and agencies.
 - improving the quality of court hearings; and
 - to engage in joint efforts with the child welfare agency around data.
- CIP's 2021-2026 Strategic plan narrows our focus to safety-based decision making, the utilization of established best practices, and diversity, equity, inclusion and access.

Contact: Call or text Terry Scanlon, legislative liaison for Colorado Courts, at (303) 957-8137.