

Draft Minutes
Juvenile Access Pilot Program Advisory Board
Subcommittee on Evaluation/Assessment of the Pilot Program
October 13, 2009 Meeting

Present: Judge Quinn, co-chair, Sarah Eagan, co-chair, Judge Keller, Fran Carino, Barbara Claire (for Stacey Gerber), Cynthia Cunningham, Deborah Fuller, Colin Poitras, Nancy Porter

1. Overview of Criminal Pilot Program Evaluation

The meeting was called to order at 3:10. Rhonda Stearley-Hebert distributed the materials that were used in the evaluation of the Criminal Pilot Program and then presented an overview of that program and its evaluation. She pointed out that different evaluation forms were used for judges, attorneys and the media, and that members of each of those groups were involved in the development of the questionnaires that would be used for their group. For a period of eleven months, evaluation questionnaires were distributed each time a camera request was made. The clerks distributed the questionnaires and received them back either by regular mail or by e-mail. Ultimately 168 questionnaires were returned, after which time the Pilot Program Advisory Board determined that it had sufficient feedback and stopped distributing the questionnaires.

Rhonda pointed out that the evaluations brought out a concern from the attorneys for the parties, who did not feel that they received sufficient notice of the camera requests. This will be addressed by a standing order that will require notification to the attorneys.

Rhonda also pointed out that in terms of process, although the Rule governing the Pilot Program required a 3-day notice for camera requests, that did not occur in practice. In addition, she noted that the number of requests was tracked by entering every request into a database.

A discussion of the term “approved media” ensued. Rhonda stated that the Judicial Branch developed a very broad list of “approved media”, but that it was limited to media with the ability to act as a pool photographer. This limitation could be used because the pilot program dealt with camera requests; it could not be used for non-camera coverage.

2. Review and Discussion of Evaluation Tools

Judge Quinn and Sarah Eagan opened the discussion on evaluation. Fran Carino suggested that input from the families should be solicited, as the purpose of the court is to protect the parties. Sarah pointed out that Prof. Patton, whose article had been distributed, criticized the Minnesota evaluation because it did not seek input from the parties.

Sarah suggested the Advisory Board follow the example of the Criminal Pilot Program and use separate evaluation questionnaires for the various categories of participants. She further suggested that Advisory Board members from each category work together to develop the questionnaires for their category. The following assignments were discussed:

Judge Quinn and Judge Keller work on the questionnaire for judges

Carolyn Signorelli and Sarah Eagan work on the questionnaire for attorney
Anne Louise Blanchard, David Marantz and Christina Ghio work on the questionnaire for
parents/children
Susan Pearlman work on the questionnaire for Assistant Attorneys General
Stacey Gerber work on the questionnaire for DCF case workers
Justine Rakich-Kelly work on the questionnaire for Guardians ad Litem
Cynthia Cunningham work on the questionnaire for clerks and court service officers
Colin Poitras work on the questionnaire for the media

It was suggested that a database or other system be developed to keep track of the total number of proceedings in the pilot program, the number of those in which a motion was made to limit access, the rulings in those cases, and any appeals filed. Sarah noted that a lot of good information could be gleaned from court personnel.

It was also pointed out that the subcommittee and full Advisory Board should clearly identify what questions should be answered by the evaluations. What are the performance measures? Should they just be the statutory goals? Judge Keller noted that she would like to know the reason that a motion to close was filed or any particular proceeding was closed.

The issue of whether the evaluation questionnaires should be reviewed by someone or some entity with professional experience in evaluation, such as the Center for Effective Practice, was raised, but it was also noted that such a review might be limited by the lack of time and funding.

3. Future Meetings

The work schedule of the subcommittee was discussed. It was determined that the list of assignments for the development of evaluation forms would be sent out to members, along with the specifics of the assignment. It was suggested that at least two subcommittee meetings would be required to review the proposed evaluation forms, and that the scheduling of the next subcommittee meeting would need allow time for development of the forms.

The next meeting was scheduled for November 10, 2009, at 3:00. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:45.