

**Minutes**  
**Juvenile Access Pilot Program Advisory Board**  
**Subcommittee on Evaluation/Assessment of the Pilot Program Meeting**  
**November 10, 2009 Meeting**

Present: Judge Quinn, Sarah Eagan, Judge Keller, Cynthia Cunningham, David Marantz, Stacey Gerber, Justine Rakich-Kelly, Christina Ghio, Colin Poitras, Bryan Morris, Susan Pearlman, Deborah Fuller, Linda Cheng

The meeting was convened at approximately 1:15.

1. **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes for the October 13, 2009 meeting were approved.

2. **Review of Draft Survey Questionnaires**

General:

The conversation began with a discussion of when the questionnaires should be distributed to the participants in proceedings – after each proceeding, or at the end of a set period of time. There is a benefit to obtaining feedback at the end of a period of time from people who participate in these proceedings. This would yield a longer-range view and therefore be of great value in assessing the pilot program. It would be possible for the court to identify people who participated in more than three proceedings.

The group also discussed making the surveys more uniform. One possibility would be to start out with general questions that apply to all groups and then go to more specific questions that are tailored to each targeted group. Judge Keller volunteered to take a look at all the surveys in order to identify duplicate questions and develop a questionnaire that would begin with common questions and then have the targeted questions down below.

A discussion of the types of questions that should be asked ensued. Some of the questions that appear on the draft surveys, many of which were taken from other states, ask general questions that really cannot be answered by those responding to the surveys. Examples of these types of questions are, “Did the public become more aware...?” or “Did it improve the process?” It is questionable whether a survey of participants can get at the answers to these types of questions. It would make more sense to tailor the questions to get at objective information. Additional resources would be needed to get at the more nebulous questions, but the Board has not been provided with any funding to do that. Because of this, in the end the evaluation of the pilot program will not answer the question of whether children have been harmed by opening the proceedings.

It was suggested that the Board should try to identify a researcher who would volunteer to review the surveys proposed by the Board.

Discussion of Media Survey:

There was discussion of whether those who are present at pilot program proceedings should be required to identify themselves. Attorney Marantz stated his support for the idea of a public notice that would let everyone present know that they are attending a pilot program which is being assessed. Judge Keller stated that she believes that people, especially contract attorneys, will be upset if people are no longer required to identify themselves at the start of a proceeding. An alternative suggestion was to post a sign at the courtroom asking the media to identify themselves, and to direct them to go to a bin by the clerk's office to pick up a survey.

The idea of sending a letter to news editors to ask them to identify which pilot program proceedings were covered by their reporters was discussed. Colin Poitras stated that he thinks the Board would be more likely to get the type of input we are seeking from the media if a survey is done at the end of a set period of time. Editors would be likely to be responsive so such an inquiry, which could be sent to all outlets.

A discussion of the difficulty of getting people to respond to the survey ensued. In Minnesota a mailing to all media outlets resulted in too few responses; it had to be followed up with several phone calls. The most likely way of ensuring that surveys would be filled out would be to distribute it at the proceedings. There was further discussion of having a rack with the surveys outside the courtroom so people could take a survey & fill it out there. It was suggested that the judges should strongly recommend that the parties fill out the surveys.

Court Staff Survey:

Cynthia Cunningham stated that she had drafted the court staff survey to be filled out after a period of time, not after each case, but that it could be amended to collect information after each case as well. Regarding the questions, concerns were expressed that asking generally about the "impact" of opening proceedings is too general and would not lead to useful feedback. All agreed that questions asking generally about the "impact" should be made more specific.

There was further discussion about asking people to identify themselves, and many members favored requiring those present in the courtroom to identify themselves. Knowing who actually attends the proceeding would be a valuable part of assessing the pilot program. A suggestion was made that circulating a sign-in sheet would be a less obtrusive way to gather the information than asking participants to verbally identify themselves.

GAL Survey:

Judge Quinn pointed out that this survey was also drafted as a look-back instrument, and that there would need to be an additional questionnaire to collect information after each case. Perhaps this survey could be changed to collect information after each case, and more long-range information could be collected through a focus group with individuals who had participated in or attended several proceedings.

Christina suggested adding a question that would ask everyone if they had been to the Child Protection Session before, and, if so, whether their own preparation had changed.

The value of subjective or opinion questions was discussed. A suggestion was made to include an open-ended question that would solicit an opinion about the pilot program.

A discussion of the difficulty of getting some of the critical information about the impact of the pilot program ensued, particularly regarding the general public, such as neighbors and community members who will now have greater access to child protection proceedings involving members of their community. Christina Ghio stated that some questions directed to individuals such as neighbors, such as “What prompted you to come?” would be important to ask. Bryan Morris pointed out that the party’s statements in court might be influenced by the fact that they will be public and could be used in a different context.

3. **Schedule Next Meeting**

The next subcommittee meeting was scheduled for November 23 at 2:00 p.m.

4. **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:56 p.m.