

MINUTES
**PROBLEM SOLVING IN FAMILY SUPPORT MAGISTRATE COURT
NEW HAVEN PILOT IMPLEMENTATION TEAM**
DECEMBER 01, 2009

The Problem Solving in Family Support Magistrate Court New Haven Pilot Implementation Team met at 370 James Street, New Haven, CT.

Members in attendance: Chief Family Support Magistrate Sandra Sosnoff Baird (Chair), Ms. Dalia Panke (Vice-chair), Family Support Magistrate Linda T. Wihbey, Family Support Magistrate Christopher Oliveira, Mr. Paul Bevins, Mr. Blannie Bostic, Atty. Alice A. Bruno, Mr. Joseph Greelish, Mr. Thomas Horan, Mr. David M. Iaccarino, Ms. Sherman Malone, Ms. Belinda Noebel, Ms. Joyce Pellegrino, Ms. Yosley Saxton,

Guests in attendance: Mr. Timothy Brown, Male Involvement Network; Mr. Andre Davis, Male Involvement Network; and Ms. Barbara Tinney, Executive Director of the New Haven Family Alliance, and Mr. Allan Williams, Male Involvement Network.

1- Welcome and Introductions of Members

The meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m. by CFSM Sosnoff-Baird who thanked everyone for attending. Special thanks to the New Haven Family Alliance staff for facilitating the meeting location. All members and guests present introduced themselves. It was stated that representatives from the IV-D program, DSS, Attorney General's Office were invited and may come in late.

2- Approval of minutes

The minutes from the last meeting held on November 03, 2009 were approved by the committee.

3- Presentation of Workgroup Status Reports

All four workgroups presented written or verbal status reports. It was recognized that all work groups have accomplished a lot, but the Court Logistics group has made significant progress due to their stated objective of setting up the framework and providing the infrastructure for the program.

The *Court Logistics Work Group* presented their interim report for approval. The discussion centered on the following sections of the report: *Planning for Court Resources – Personnel* – the group identified the need for two family magistrates, Ms. Belinda Noebel from the clerk's office will handle the files and other materials, but will not be stationed in the courtroom, a Judicial Marshall already stationed outside in the hallway will monitor the courtroom, Ms. Yosley Saxton has been designated the Support Enforcement Officer for this courtroom. A recommendation was made to have a court monitor present in the courtroom. Final decision from Judge Quinn is pending. Non-Judicial personnel identified were representatives from the New Haven Family Alliance, the Male Involvement Network, and court appointed attorneys. *Planning for Court Resources – Non Personnel* – amongst the needs identified by the group were a computer with Internet access and its peripherals, and a panic button. It was explained that even though the process may seem informal, it will contain all of the elements and minimum requirements essential in all court matters. A new legend is being created to differentiate this docket. It was also noted that the group identified best practices in conjunction with scheduling issues to ensure that all of the work done will support the interrelationship between the two courtrooms.

A lengthy discussion followed regarding amendments to the report. A motion was made, and approved by the team, to add to the committee's work the "Access and Visitation" recommendation from the Problem Solving in Family Matter Committee's final report. Issues

surrounding access and visitation will be addressed by two work groups. The community related part of the work will be handled by the Development of Local Resources work group; and the Interagency Resources work group will be responsible for the government related aspect of it. The work groups will investigate the availability of resources and how these can be made available. The value of continuing the current involvement Family Relations has in custody and visitation mediation services was discussed. To that end, Mr. Brian Coco will be invited to join as the Family Relations, CSSD representative. Finally, the following amendments were voted on and approved by the team:

- Reference was made in the document to the assignment of cases being limited to the Wednesday contempt docket. It was suggested to remove the word “contempt” and just keep the “Wednesday docket.”
- The use of Court Interpreters will be added to section “I. Planning for Court Resources – Personnel” for on-the-record matters.

The interim report was approved as amended. This report will be supplemented as the committee moves forward with implementation.

The *Case Management and Evaluation Work Group* submitted a status report for the team’s approval. The group developed objective criteria for eligibility into the Problem Solving court. The 4 criteria components identified were the existence of a criminal record, lack of work history, lack of education, and environmental barriers such as need for housing. The group recommended that for a person to be eligible, 2 or more criteria components must be present and the person must have the willingness to participate. A history of domestic violence will preclude a person from participating. A discussion ensued regarding what constitutes domestic violence history. The group looked at it in general terms; not limited neither to the parties nor to time limitations. The group will go back and look at time limitations. The following amendments were voted on and approved by the team:

- Change the eligibility criteria to “1 or more” instead of “2 or more” and a willingness to participate.
- Change the language on the exclusions paragraph under item 1 of the report. The group will discuss new language at their December 7th meeting.

Support Enforcement is working on developing a referral form for the Bench to use when entering orders. If the person is not eligible, he/she will have to go back to the regular contempt docket. This form will remain in the Problem Solving file, not the court file since it may contain information not normally found in the court file.

The *Development of Local Resources Work Group* is working on creating a catalog of service providers and programs available. The Court Service Center is sharing their list of available resources, as well as the New Haven Family Alliance, who will also assist with the vetting process. The catalog will include information such as program capacity, target population, costs, program eligibility, etc. Items for further discussion by this group are future responsibilities, program submission, materials to be gathered, and ensure statutes and non-discriminatory practices are followed. They will meet on Tuesday, December 8, 2009 at 2:00pm at 414 Chapel Street, Training Room, New Haven.

The *Interagency Resources Work Group* reported there are some agencies that the Problem Solving program can leverage or tap into. The agencies identified were CSSD, DHMAS, DOL, DSS, DOC, SSA, Parole, and the City of New Haven. Initial contact has been made with all the agencies. The group is working on finding out each agencies preferred mechanism for referrals and suggested exercising caution when making these referrals to avoid conflicts with the agencies’ purposes as it can have an impact in the disposition of the cases. The group is making the following preliminary recommendations: community resources revealed by this work group will be sent to the Local Resources work group for further investigation and relationship building; the Problem Solving Program should use general terms

when making the referrals (i.e. needs educational or vocational services); and refer cases to Probation or Parole. It was understood that the goal of referring clients back to probation is not to violate their probation, but to help the person overcome the barriers. An advantage appealing to Probation is that the Problem Solving staff will be assisting them in doing the needs assessment to help jumpstart the referral.

4- Discussion of Implementation Plans

CFSM Sosnof-Baird noted that both the Development of Local Resources and Interagency Resources work groups work will continue throughout the implementation process. The first Problem Solving Docket is scheduled for January 27, 2010 at 235 Church Street, New Haven. There will be a printed docket with the new legend in place on that date.

5- Other business

No other business was discussed.

6. Future meetings

The team is scheduled to meet again on January 5, 2010 at 2:00pm at 414 Chapel Street, New Haven.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:41 p.m.