

**INTERIM REPORT COURT LOGISTICS WORK GROUP  
OF THE  
IMPLEMENTATION TEAM FOR PROBLEM SOLVING  
IN FAMILY SUPPORT MAGISTRATE COURT-NEW HAVEN PILOT  
NOVEMBER 23, 2009**

The work group met three times in the month of November to address its objective to plan and recommend implementation steps to provide the necessary infrastructure in support of the problem solving in Family Support Magistrate Court pilot in New Haven. The work group identified the following areas to address: necessary court resources-personnel and non personnel, scheduling concerns and the additional continuing concern of supporting the interrelationship between the two designated courtrooms 3A and 301, to facilitate case flow. Because this is a pilot program we expect to evaluate court logistics throughout the process. The work group has developed preliminary recommendations to institute the project. These recommendations will be supplemented, during the months of December and January as the other three groups develop their recommendations.

**I. Planning for Court Resources-Personnel**

The group has identified the following court personnel whose roles should be considered in this planning process: two Family Support Magistrates, the court clerk's office, judicial marshals, court monitor, Support Enforcement Officer (SEO). Other court participants, non judicial

branch personnel identified are Family Alliance, Male Involvement Network and court appointed attorneys.

Two Family Support Magistrates will be assigned to the New Haven Judicial District on Wednesdays, the day the contempt docket is heard. The work group proposes that the team recommend to the Chief Court Administrator that the second magistrate be assigned starting January 6, 2010, to facilitate the start of the program later in January. Magistrate Christopher Oliveira will maintain his current assignment in New Haven(Courtroom 3A). Magistrate Linda Wihbey will preside in Courtroom 301, where cases utilizing problem solving techniques under this pilot will be heard. Magistrate Wihbey may also be assigned to New Haven on Tuesdays, as required to review court files, meet with court personnel, attend community meetings, meet with other team members in preparation and support of the Wednesday contempt docket.

The clerk's office will be responsible for maintaining the court files as well as the scheduling, docketing, providing notice of matters designated as problem solving (see Item number III.)and also the interrelationship of the two courtrooms on Wednesdays when the contempt docket is heard. (see Item number IV). The issue of the completion of Form JD-FM-170 and other order sheets shall be developed in collaboration with the Case Management work group. Although the work group does not recommend that a clerk be assigned to courtroom 301, it recognizes that the clerk's office may need additional staff to serve the needs of the Problem Solving in the Family Support Magistrate Session.

The work group recommends that a judicial marshal be assigned to facilitate an orderly and safe process for the problem solving pilot. It may not be necessary for the

judicial marshal to be present in the courtroom, but there must be one stationed and available in close proximity to courtroom 301. The requirement of a judicial marshal in the courtroom will be monitored closely throughout the pilot process. The work group recommended the installation of a panic button in courtroom 301, which has already been provided.

Support Enforcement Services (SES) has designated Yoseley Saxton as the Support Enforcement Officer (SEO) in the New Haven SES office, to fulfill the important function of supporting the Family Support Magistrate by providing accurate information to assist a parent in fulfilling his or her duty to support and further offering services to both parents in a neutral and impartial manner. These duties are set forth more fully in Attachment One and incorporated herein.

A courtroom monitor will provide the necessary support for the operation of a recording device as required to maintain a record of court proceedings. The Chief Court Administrator will decide whether all of the proceedings with the Family Support Magistrate will be on the record. The majority of the work group recommended that proceedings be on the record. The Chief Court Administrator asked the Team to investigate whether all of the proceedings are on the record in other states which follow the problem solving model and other proceedings in Connecticut. The results of that research may be found on Attachment Number two and will be submitted to the Chief Court Administrator, along with this report.

## **II.Planning for Court Resources -Non Personnel**

The work group identified the following non-personnel resources in support of the problem solving in the Family Support Magistrate Court: computer with internet capability and access to CCSES, computer printer, and development of computer programs to monitor and measure outcomes, additional parking space, and a telephone with outside and long distance access. Also identified but already available are: two courtrooms-3A and Room 301; a chambers-301 is available for the use by the Family Support Magistrate when court is not in session, and the magistrate will otherwise use the chambers adjacent to Courtroom 3A; panic button; copy machine located in a secure area adjacent to courtroom 3A; and court monitoring equipment. Representatives of the work group will cooperate with the New Haven clerk's office to assess furniture needs, including a file cabinet with locking capability.

## **III. Identification of Scheduling Issues**

The work group had considerable discussion about the options for docket preparation that would help identify the cases referred for problem solving. The group expects that there may be adjustments in its recommendations before January as other Judicial Branch experts are consulted and the Case management work group develops its recommendations. The group identified best practices in conjunction with scheduling issues: provide a unified docket; provide proper notice of court hearings to the parties; ease of use by the staff; capability to be user-friendly to the public, the bar, and the community agencies; capability to track the case's progress; system compatibility; coordination between courtrooms and presiding magistrates;

and ability to replicate the docket process in other Judicial Districts.

The primary options considered were to utilize prefixes that would print on the docket in front of the docket number or to utilize a new docket legend code that would print on the calendar. After extensive discussion, the group recommended using the new docket legend code, but did not make a decision whether two legends would be printed for each case.

The informational notice that is part of the printed docket needs to be addressed to expand the possibility of cases being heard at specific times of the day (rather than to report at 9:00 am) and in a different courtroom than indicated. It was recommended for the notice to be revised to read "The call of the cases will be at 10:00 A.M. in Courtroom 3A unless otherwise notified of a different time and Courtroom."

After the referral to problem solving, Support Enforcement Services will send a letter to both parties indicating the next court date, time, and courtroom. It was undetermined whether it was necessary for the clerk to send a notice (e.g., JDNO) to the parties.

#### **IV. Support of the Interrelationship Between the Two Court Rooms to Facilitate Case Flow**

While identifying this item as important, the work group has concluded all of the above recommendations and concerns are necessary to enhance the interrelationship and to facilitate case flow. Of concern to the work group is the communication, the assignment of cases, and movement of parties and transfer of files between the two courtrooms.

However, because of its critical nature, the work group has designated it separately and awaits the reports from the other work groups to determine if separate recommendations relating to court logistics are necessary.