

MINUTES
PROBLEM SOLVING IN FAMILY MATTERS COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 23, 2009

The Problem Solving in Family Matters Committee of the Implementation Plan met in Courtroom 4B at 400 Grand Street, Waterbury, CT.

Those in attendance: Hon. Lynda B. Munro, (Chair), Chief Family Support Magistrate Sandra Sosnoff Baird, Family Support Magistrate John E. Colella, Mr. Brian Coco, Mr. Patrick J. Deak, Mr. John Dillon, Mr. Joseph DiTunno, Ms. Barbara Geller, Mr. Joseph Greelish, Mr. Gregory Halzack, Ms. Michelle Hayward, Atty. Charisse E. Hutton, Mr. David M. Iaccarino, Ms. Debra Kulak, Atty. David Mulligan, Ms. Dalia Panke, Dr. Brett Rayford, Family Support Magistrate Linda T. Wihbey, Mr. Edgar Young, and Ms. Bernice Zampano.

1- Welcome new members

Judge Munro welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. She reiterated the issue before the committee is to find a solution on how to integrate obligors appropriately and responsibly in order to create or strengthen the relationship with their child. There are models that are specialized, however, Connecticut is a small state and can benefit from bringing the resources to Magistrate Court without the pricey tag of a specialized court. The committee's goal is to gather this information/resources and brainstorm on a strategy. She reviewed the task accomplished at the first committee meeting – the creation of two work groups to make use of the different resources available. She also explained each work groups' function.

2- Approval of minutes

The minutes from the last meeting held on January 12, 2009 were approved by the committee.

3- Progress Update - Work Group 1 Identification, Assessment, and Recommendations

Magistrate Wihbey and Ms. Panke explained how the work group identified 5 common challenges, looked at how the barriers overlap, had a lengthy discussion on the definitions of the terms incarceration and custody based on Department of Correction guidelines. The work group offered preliminary recommendations and identified other areas where a better understanding is needed. As a result, a couple of housing representatives, Mr. Ralphie Podolsky, legal aid attorney and Bob Solomon from Yale Professor, will be invited to join the committee. The recommendation to talk to formerly incarcerated individuals was made by committee members.

A clarification was made as to the use of the term "Fatherhood." Although the term is being used loosely by committee members, to provide a broad view of the non-custodial parent. It does not just refer to dads since women who are released from prison also face the same challenges.

4- Progress Update – Work Group 2 Overlap

Mr. Iaccarino explained the work group's discussion centered on the fact that overlapping occurs at two levels – in courts, and in other agencies/units that interact with the court. They also discussed different methods to reach the population effectively. The main strategy is technology. Therefore, the group identified computer systems that may contain information about the population this committee is trying to serve. Then, the computer systems were broken down into three categories – Judicial, Non-Judicial, and Non-Judicial with limited access. The challenge faced by the group is the need to find a unique identifier to connect the

systems and match the data effectively without violating confidentiality laws. Mr. Greelish is working on creating a diagram that traces each database to each agency with access. Finally, even though bridging access is a challenge, it can be overcome through a cooperative mode. The group also identified areas that require better understanding. A representative from the Legal Services Unit should be invited to join the committee to help better comprehend the legal aspect of trying to bridge the access gap, including working with a Memorandum of Understanding.

5- New Business – any other background work required

Both groups agreed that other ideas might not have been articulated yet and that more information is necessary in both areas of the work groups.

The committee members expressed the importance of understanding what services are provided to the incarcerated population, from the time the inmate receives an inmate number to the time he/she re-enters the community, even if the individual is still under the Jurisdiction of the Department of Correction. Once those services are identified, buy-in from other courts and agencies is important in order to offer a comprehensively arranged set of services.

Title 19 still needs to be addressed. Specifically, non-custodial parents who may qualify for Title 19 but are not aware of it because no one has sat down with them to assist in filling out the required paperwork. It was discussed that Saga seems to be a straight point resource between the Department of Correction and the community. Mr. Dillon and Mr. Mulligan will contact the person handling Saga at the Department of Social Services, and that individual will be invited to join the committee. In addition, the following committee additions were agreed upon: a representative from the Fatherhood Program, Doug Edwards, will be invited, and a representative from the Department of Social Services should be on each of the work groups.

In the end, the execution piece will point to how the services will interface with the Magistrate Court. At which time, the Court Service Centers and the Branch's Volunteer/Intern Program will be key players.

Finally, the committee members identified the following work to be done prior to the next meeting:

- Judge Munro will speak to the website re-design team to secure a place for the committee's work.
- The Support Enforcement Services Unit will provide a copy of the "Profile of the Formerly/Presently Incarcerated Non Custodial Parent" to be distributed to all members. Additionally, a link to the PowerPoint presentation will be posted on the committee's webpage.
- A representative from a women's domestic violence group will be invited.
- Members should start thinking about whether any rulemaking might be necessary for any of the goals.

6. Timeline and future meetings

The committee agreed to meet on Monday, March 23, 2009 in Courtroom 4B at 400 Grand Street, Waterbury, CT at 9:00 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:24 a.m.