

NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY

Department of Family Administration Foster Care Court Improvement Project Special Project Grants

Issue Date: September 9, 2009
Applications Due: September 25, 2009

General Information

The Maryland Judiciary began an important initiative to improve its responsiveness to cases involving children in foster care in 1997 with the establishment of the Foster Care Court Improvement Project. Since that time, the circuit courts have reoriented their case management practices and developed programs towards that end.

The Department of Family Administration, Foster Care Court Improvement Project at the Administrative Office of the Courts is requesting applications for Special Project Grants. Subject to the provision of funds, grants will be awarded to applicable programs which enhance the court's ability to effectively respond to and manage CINA and TPR cases.

Funds can be used for one-time events, for example educational seminars or trainings, or for on-going programs, for example, contracting with a service provider to provide PPL-related services or other services that directly or indirectly enhance the court's ability to respond to and manage CINA and TPR cases.

Award Amounts: \$1,000 - \$75,000.

The Executive Director of the Department of Family Administration and Staff are available to assist in preparing the applications. For assistance, please call 410.260.1262.

Application

Applications should include a brief description of the following:

1. Program Name and Purpose
2. Need program will address
3. Program time lines (example, one-time training or on-going program)
4. How program will operate, including court staff who will manage program and participation of any service providers, consultants, or contractor workers

5. What Performance Measures will be used to evaluate program success, and
6. Proposed Budget.

Funding Priorities

Applications submitted should depict programs that have a demonstrated or anticipated need within the courts and may include:

- One-time or multiple education programs for court staff, including Judges, Masters, and attorneys involved in child welfare cases, including contracting with outside trainers and/or lecturers
- Training programs for court staff in data entry or compiling statistics in child welfare cases
- Education or training programs for the bench, masters and/or clerks in the area of compliance with federal statutes and regulations in child welfare cases, including content of court orders
- Increasing and improving legal representation for parties in child welfare cases, including contracting with
- Development of mediation programs
- Joint agency-court training
- Automated docketing and case tracking
- Linked agency-court data systems
- One judge/one family models
- Time-specific docketing
- Formalized relationships with the child welfare agency
- Improvement of legal representation for children and families
- Jurisdiction-specific CSFR program improvement plan (PIP) development and implementation, and legislative changes
- Adopting and implementing court performance measures to allow court systems to analyze their performance regarding child safety, permanency, procedural fairness, timeliness, and, if practical, other aspects of child well-being
- Identifying and correcting State law and policy barriers to data collection and analysis, particularly to data exchange

- Developing and implementing policies and procedures that assist court employees to collect and use data in a more effective manner

Developing and implementing quality assurance and quality improvement for court operations and performance

- Developing and conducting workload assessments for judges, court staff, and attorneys, using computerized data to the extent practical, and focusing on what workloads are needed both to support judicial best practices and to achieve positive outcomes for children and families
- Collaborating and training on improving data collection and analysis
- Identify the specific skills and areas of knowledge that judges, attorneys, and other legal personnel need to best serve children and families
- Develop curricula that address those skills and areas of knowledge and employ the most effective methods for imparting them
- Ensure that all who need such training will receive it, such as by making participation convenient, providing inducements for attendance or imposing requirements for attendance, and tracking attendance
- Ensure that those attending training actually obtain the identified skills and knowledge, such as through online testing and refresher training
- Use technology such as online training and training videos
- Convene local meetings and groups to participate in training developed in remote locations, such as through use of videos or videoconferences
- Provide cross-system, multidisciplinary training on topics of mutual interest to different participants in the system, such as mental health, substance abuse, education of children in foster care, the role of caseworkers in court, and the preparation and use of court reports
- Co-locate judicial, court employee, and agency training, when practical, to allow a combination of cross-system training and separate training on specialized topics

* Projects that promote access to the family and juvenile justice system

- Programs providing innovative family services that address unmet needs of litigants and their families
- Programs that provide access to Alternative Dispute Resolution services for families involved in the court system
- Other programs that enhance the court's ability to serve families and children

Eligible Grantees

Eligible grantees include the courts and court-related agencies.

Funding Cycle

Grant awards will be made to fund projects for up to one year, beginning October 8, 2009 through October 8, 2010. **Awards will be announced October 8, 2009.**

Grant Payments

If awarded, and unless otherwise provided for in the grant agreement, grant funds will be paid on a *reimbursement basis*, upon submission of timely financial expenditure reporting and a request for payment.

Applicable Guidelines

In applying for funds, grantees agree to comply with the *Family Division / Family Services Grants: Guidelines for Grant Recipients* for Fiscal Year 2010. Applicants should thoroughly review the *Guidelines* before applying. The *Guidelines* may be found at:

www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html.

Applications are due on or before 5:00 p.m. on Friday September 25, 2009 and should be directed to:

Connie Kratovil-Lavelle
Executive Director
Department of Family Administration
Administrative Office of the Courts
580 Taylor Avenue, 2nd Floor, A Pod
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Faxed or e-mailed copies of the application WILL BE ACCEPTED if followed by an original.

For further information regarding this notice of funding or the application process, please contact Connie Kratovil-Lavelle, Executive Director, Family Administration at (410) 260-1262.