

# ONE PROJECT ONE

## SPOTLIGHT ON THE INAUGURAL ALL-SITES MEETING

---



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF  
JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT JUDGES

[WWW.NCJFCJ.ORG](http://WWW.NCJFCJ.ORG)



**The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges®** (NCJFCJ), headquartered on the University of Nevada, Reno campus since 1969, provides cutting-edge training, wide-ranging technical assistance, and research to help the nation's courts, judges, and staff in their important work. Since its founding in 1937 by a group of judges dedicated to improving the effectiveness of the nation's juvenile courts, the NCJFCJ has pursued a mission to improve courts and systems practice and raise awareness of the core issues that touch the lives of many of our nation's children and families.

For more information about the NCJFCJ or this document, please contact:

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges  
University of Nevada  
P.O. Box 8970  
Reno, Nevada 89507  
(775) 327-5300  
www.ncjfcj.org

©2014, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. All rights reserved.

Mari Kay Bickett, JD Chief Executive Officer National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges	Shawn C. Marsh, Ph.D. Chief Program Officer, Juvenile Law National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges
--	---

---

**Author:** John Rosiak, M.Ed.

**Acknowledgments:** This is a publication of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges wishes to acknowledge that this material is made possible by Cooperative Agreement No. 2012-MU-MU-K001 from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice, or the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

**Suggested Citation:** Rosiak, J. (2014). *Project ONE: Spotlight on the Inaugural All-Sites Meeting*. Reno, NV: National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

## INTRODUCTION

This brief serves as a summary of a foundational event in the life of the Project ONE initiative—the All-Sites meeting held in Reno, NV on May 15-16, 2014. The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) developed Project ONE as a groundbreaking effort designed to transform the various courts that serve youth and families into more unified courts that are better situated to serve the needs of families. A pilot project—identifying six courts from around the United States—is enabling these sites to take bold steps toward more unified courts that provide better-coordinated services for families. These six sites, with training and technical support from NCJFCJ and from each other, are helping to clarify for courts how to move more effectively toward a unified court model. The May 2014 meeting of teams from the six sites proved as enlightening to the sites as it did to the national movement to advance this concept.

**Project ONE seeks to provide judges and their court teams with guidance for supporting the needs of families and children no matter which court – family law, child welfare, family violence, juvenile justice, etc. – they enter.**

## BACKGROUND ON PROJECT ONE

The NCJFCJ has been a leader in the use of multi-systems responses to justice-involved youth and families. To that end the NCJFCJ has engaged in the process of identifying models, strategies, and practices for the local courts to offer more unified and coordinated access to justice. The NCJFCJ launched Project ONE to expand the practices and processes of courts trying to better coordinate and deliver effective interventions. As part of the project, the NCJFCJ scheduled a Project ONE All-Sites meeting held in May of 2014, designed to support the six demonstration sites in their implementation of the project.

What is the history of Project ONE? In 2010, with funding from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), to support critical cross-departmental and cross-system work, the NCJFCJ began work on the Multi-Court Collaboration (MCC) Initiative—now known as Project ONE. The name Project ONE was chosen to signify a holistic approach to families through the concepts of One Family/One Judge, No Wrong Door, and Equal and Coordinated Access to Justice.

**“Project ONE is ideal for trying out local efforts to meet the needs of our families and children in an effective, coordinated manner. This permits us to “tweak” the process so it can be institutionalized and shared with other states.”**

**The Honorable Lynn Tepper, 6th Judicial Circuit Court, Dade City, Pasco County, FL**

Central to Project ONE is a holistic view of individuals and families, a life-course perspective on human development, and a focus on ensuring equal and coordinated access to justice regardless of presenting issues. One of the initiative’s goals is to develop and share resources for innovative practices across the country, where courts effectively demonstrate multi-court collaboration in practice.

## PROJECT ONE SITES

- Jefferson County Family Court, Louisville, Kentucky (Honorable Joan Byer)
- Milwaukee County Circuit Court, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Honorable Marshall B. Murray)
- North Okaloosa County Unified Family Court, Crestview, Florida (Honorable Terrance Ketchel)
- Orleans Parish Juvenile Court, New Orleans, Louisiana (Honorable Ernestine S. Gray)
- Sixth Judicial Circuit Court (Pasco County), Dade City, Florida (Honorable Lynn Tepper)
- Second Judicial District Court, Family Division (Washoe County), Reno, Nevada (Honorable Egan Walker).

**“Project ONE represents a significant shift in the way courts are doing business related to meeting the needs of families and children. If we can successfully coordinate services and interventions, it is my belief that we can keep families together safely and out of the court system.”**

**The Honorable Joan Byer, Jefferson Circuit Court, Louisville, KY**



## THE ALL-SITES MEETING

The purpose of the All-Sites meeting was to provide the six Project ONE demonstration sites with support to advance their local work, as well as to gain insight on how to promote the unified court model across the country. The NCJFCJ developed an extensive and interactive agenda designed to provide content and activities that were useful and relevant to the teams from the six communities. The site teams attending the All-Sites meeting were comprised of key players who will help achieve success in local communities, including: judges, court administrators and other court staff, attorneys from various agencies, and managers from child-serving agencies.

This snapshot summarizes key learnings from the meeting sessions. It also sheds a spotlight on some

**“A ‘pilot’ is both necessary and important as the various jurisdictions move forward because outcomes need to be measured and best practices developed. Once these best practices are developed, based on the various ‘pilots,’ the model can be implemented at the national level.”**

**Project ONE Site Team**

of the novel ways in which the pilot court communities are trying to advance a variety of strategies and programs that are part and parcel of a unified court.

**MAJOR PROJECT ONE THEMES THAT EMERGED FROM THE MEETING:**

- Communities need to develop ways that a unified court approach can meet the needs of all family members.
- The unified court process needs to ensure that serving the needs of youth and their families takes precedence over complying with whatever systems exist in the

community.

- Collaboration should be court-led and provide “efficient” and “timely” services.
- As Project ONE communities evolve in their understanding of the issues they face, it is important to include new developments, such as “trauma-informed” care, attention to youth brain development science, and other advances in the human services field.
- The Project ONE movement is consistent with the goal of OJJDP that contact with the juvenile justice system should be “rare, fair, and beneficial.”

**The meeting proved valuable not only to the site teams, but also in clarifying issues and processes that can help any court move toward a more unified and coordinated model that focuses more on the youth and family than the multiple court systems that may exist in a given jurisdiction.**

**PROJECT ONE ALL-SITES MEETING SESSION HIGHLIGHTS**

**Sharing Information Across Systems: Improving Outcomes for Youth and Families**

*Presented by Jessica K. Heldman, JD, Associate Executive Director, Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice, Boston, MA.*

In this session, Jessica Heldman shared valuable experiences in working with systems from around the country on the topic of information sharing. Those experiences showed that, in order to achieve the goals of coordinating the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, there needed to be an understanding of information sharing permissions and prohibitions, along with mechanisms for facilitating the sharing of information. Many valuable tools have been created, such as the Models for Change Information Sharing Toolkit: <http://www.modelsforchange.net/publications/282>.

**Moving from Concept to Practice in a Trauma-Informed Judicial System**

*Presented by Shawn Marsh, Ph.D., Chief Program Officer for Juvenile Law, NCJFCJ.*

Dr. Marsh presented how juvenile and family courts are uniquely positioned to help identify traumatized individuals and get them intervention services. The session covered what it means to be “trauma-informed,” which includes both:

- 1) being knowledgeable about the biological/psychological/social impacts of cumulative adverse or toxic/traumatic experience; and
- 2) ensuring that environments, practices, and policies are designed to reduce unnecessary stress and potential stress reactions in those that have been trauma-exposed.

### **The Five Planets: Dependency, Delinquency, Adult Criminal, Family, and Civil Courts**

*Presented by Martha-Elin Blomquist, Ph.D., Site Manager, NCJFCJ.*

Dr. Blomquist led a discussion about the five court systems that local jurisdictions sometimes deal with:

1. Dependency
2. Delinquency
3. Adult criminal court
4. Family court
5. Civil courts handling protection orders.

Teams discussed several defining features of each court system:

- The goal of the court
- How a case is initiated
- Legal representation
- Standard of proof
- Professionals used to prove a case
- Disproportional minority involvement
- Access to hearings and records
- Duration and time frame
- Verdict, judgment, or outcome
- Impact on families.

**“One of the most valuable things learned from the All-Sites meeting is that each jurisdiction is basically dealing with the same issues. Sharing our experiences was helpful, thought-provoking, and motivating.”**

**Representatives from one of the site teams**

**“The importance of information sharing, collaboration, coordinated case management, trauma informed courts, goal setting, evidence-based practices, and performance measurement...”**

**One of the site teams summing up the major themes of the meeting**

### **Creating Your Ideal Case Flow**

*Led by Alicia Summers, Ph.D., Program Director, Research and Evaluation, NCJFCJ.*

One important step for Project ONE communities is to develop a case flow that identifies the point of entry for each court system, along with the processes that youth and family members go through in those systems. Dr. Summers led the sites through an activity that asked them to map their ideal system. She then took the sites through a SWOT analysis activity that included identifying the internal factors (strengths and weaknesses of each system); and external forces (opportunities for the court and threats harmful to the court). Articulating these factors and forces helped the sites move closer to their ideal system.





*Project ONE participants completing the SWOT analysis activity*

### **Coming and Goings**

*Led by Judge Steve Aycock (Retired), Judge-in-Residence, NCJFCJ.*

NCJFCJ Judge-in-Residence, Steve Aycock led all participants in a dynamic and highly-rated exercise designed to help them develop a first-hand understanding of the lives of abused women and the decisions they have to make. Each participant assumed the role of a 35-year-old abused mother of three children with limited resources who had to decide, “does she stay, or does she go?” from her home, a hotel, a friend’s home, an apartment, a domestic violence shelter, or become homeless. Each participant was forced to make decisions based on changing circumstances; a husband who wanted her around, yet beat her; and the needs of her children. The scenario illustrated the difficult choices women must make to protect themselves and their children, and how leaving can be a dangerous process fraught with unknowns. In the debrief following the exercise, participants discussed their feelings about having to make these choices. They also discussed the obstacles they faced in trying to keep themselves and their children safe. The exercise concluded with a short mini-presentation on how courts can help survivors and their children and how courts often give mixed signals to the parties in multiple types of cases. Participants gained a deeper understanding of how their local court system needs to respond to tough cases in a way that is centered on the needs of families, rather than the courts and services presently available.

### **Strategies for Measurement**

*Presented by Lorie Sicafuse, Research Associate, NCJFCJ, Reno, NV.*

As courts develop a more unified, coordinated approach, it is important to measure the performance of the project. Measuring results increases accountability, and helps gain support for broader participation and sustainability. The session reviewed the cyclical approach to CQI (continuous quality improvement) including the steps to: Identify need, collect data, analyze data, and react. Measuring process data helps understand what you are doing to try to achieve results. Outcome data helps determine whether you achieved the results desired.

**A CHALLENGE TO PROJECT ONE IMPLEMENTATION:**

A lead judge for one of the project sites noted that the goal of family/domestic relations court is a quick and just resolution of family disputes related to marriage, child custody, and/or property. The law permits parties with family/domestic relations cases to have access to the courts until the children leave the home or are emancipated. This means that court oversight of the children in the case may be for a lengthy period of time. Reaching final disposition or case “closure” may take months or years. This reality can be challenging for Project ONE principles including One Family One Judge (especially in jurisdictions with frequent judicial rotations).

**TEAM ACTION PLANNING**

The Project ONE All-Sites meeting built in action planning time for site teams to prioritize steps they will take when they got back home, concretely identifying action they would take with whom and by when. Melissa Gueller, MS, Program Director, Child Abuse and Neglect, for NCJFCJ asked the site teams to report out action items they intend to work on:

**Jefferson County:** Schedule a trauma audit. Arrange for their local council to do trauma training. Get the administrative office on courts on board to address information sharing.

**Orleans Parish:** Work on raising awareness in the community about trauma; in the waiting area for the courtroom play the recording from the WBEZ series Inside and Out, entitled “The Mind of Mario: Trauma and Juvenile Justice”: <http://insideandout.wbez.org/content/mind-mario-trauma-and-juvenile-justice>

Look at what information to give to families about trauma. Provide training to the Department of Children and Family Services. Engage Dr. Joy Osofsky at LSU as a resource on dealing with trauma. Identify goals for information sharing; view a webinar on information sharing; complete the information sharing decision tree.

**Okaloosa County:** Focus on data collection. Define measures for foster homes and baby court. Consult with the NCJFCJ Research Team about measurements to use. Incorporate

trauma-informed care into the process, starting with a trauma audit of the court.

**Washoe County:** Do case flow exercise with entire court team. Go through cases with a SWOT analysis, and follow with action planning. Address needs for trauma training, inviting court masters. Conduct town hall meeting on trauma; train all court staff and stakeholders.

**Milwaukee County:** Review results of trauma audit when available. Implement trauma-informed approach at all levels. Address with full court team.

**Pasco County:** Conduct a court survey. Reach out to colleagues. Increase cross-referencing between delinquency and dependency so each court is aware of the issues the other court faces. Continue working on plans to open the Community Trauma School in August 2015 (to support youth impacted by trauma). Address the myriad of issues in setting up a school, such as dealing with the school board, obtaining a building, gaining corporate support, writing grants, involving providers from the community, etc.

**“The action planning activities were very helpful in visualizing what has been done, what needs to be done, and identifying where we want to be. It also is a great way to identify our strengths and weaknesses.”**

**Site team participant**



## WHAT ARE THE PROJECT ONE SITES DOING?

One of the highlights of the meeting was when each team presented a summary of their strategies/ activities/accomplishments that helped to further Project ONE principles. Each site had a spokesperson who explained their site’s special initiatives as members of the other site teams moved from station to station to learn about that initiative and ask questions. Team members from each site divided up to maximize the amount of information they could gather from the “Gallery Crawl.”

This activity fostered peer learning opportunities; it also helped capture strategies and practices that other court communities around the country can use. Here are snapshots of each of the site activities:

### MILWAUKEE, WI

#### Unified Family and Children’s Courts

In Milwaukee, the Unified Family and Children’s Court (Unified Court) promotes the resolution of disputes in a fair, comprehensive, and expeditious way by assigning related family and juvenile actions to one “unification” judge. This approach minimizes the potential for inconsistent, duplicative, or conflicting orders. The purpose of the Unified Family and Children’s Court is to promote effective judicial management of cases involving children and families and to expedite the resolution of these cases using protocols for communication and coordination to ensure that dispositions are integrated, reasonable, and achievable.

**“The most valuable thing about the All-Sites meeting was learning about information sharing and exchanging ideas and innovations with other circuits.”**

**Site team participant**

Presently, the Unified Court hears CHIPs, guardianships, juvenile injunctions, family and paternity cases twice a month. Due to the large volume of case filings, the court will be expanding its calendar time. Since its inception in 2008, over 700 cases have been heard in Unified Court. Family Court and Children’s Court are housed in separate locations. By bridging this gap and embracing the One Judge-One Family model, the Unified Court is making strides in promoting positive outcomes and preventing unnecessary court involvement for families.

#### Training of Family Court Judges

When members of the court recognized that some judges in the Family Division did not know how to access information from the Children’s Court or from the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare (and they were also confused by terms used in each division), the Hon. Marshall Murray developed a training session for family division judges involved in custody and placement hearings. The goals—the family division judges would be able to:

- Gain access to Children’s Court and Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare information
- Develop questions to ask parties to gain more in-depth knowledge of the case so they can make more informed decisions
- Understand that the terms used in the Children’s Division and Family Division may have different meanings.

A day-long training session was held with the Family Division judges and Family Court commissioners. Presenters included: The Hon. Marshall Murray; a representative from the Bureau of Milwaukee

Child Welfare, the Children’s Court representative from the District Attorney’s Office, and the judicial review coordinator. The training generated insightful discussion and promoted open dialogue between the divisions. Judges and commissioners have the resources they need to access information in a timely manner. As a result of this training and subsequent dialogue, parties are now required to file a proposed parenting plan with the court.

**Case Mapping**

**LOUISVILLE, KY**

To gain a better understanding of how juveniles make their way through the different court processes, the Jefferson County, KY court team creates case flow maps to reflect current practice and decision points for juvenile cases. The team looks at information gathered by different agencies (such as the county attorney, the public defender, and social service agencies) to help with data collection and the development of streamlined forms. In addition to using this information to create a new case management system, capturing these data is helpful to educate new judges who come into the system.

Related to case mapping is the resource mapping process that Jefferson County employs. The court team is engaged in an ongoing process to compile of all of the resources available to support juveniles and their families. This information is shared with members of the workgroup serving the juvenile. The goal is to create an electronic database that can be updated quickly and shared with all stakeholders.

**“Project ONE is placing the needs of youth and families before the needs of institutions or bureaucracy. By focusing on supportive services and positive outcomes Project ONE is building a foundation for a better coordinated, user friendly judicial system.”**

**Consensus statement from members of a Project ONE site team**

**NORTH OKALOOSA COUNTY, FL**

**Delinquency/Dependency Crossover Working Group**

In 2012, the North Okaloosa County Unified Family Court created the Delinquency/Dependency Crossover Working Group to address the lack of communication between the child welfare agency and the juvenile delinquency agency. The working group met every other month or quarterly at the Okaloosa County Courthouse. Meetings included presentations by service providers to explain services available to youth in both systems. Outcomes from the working group include: bi-weekly conference calls; dockets of each system are shared between the departments; juvenile probation officers attend dependency hearings and caseworkers attend delinquency hearings (which provides the most updated information to the court immediately); identification of data about crossover youth; presentation about available services; and increased interagency communication.

**Truancy Initiative**

The lead judges and school superintendent in Okaloosa County realized that the county’s truancy system was not improving truancy outcomes, so they worked to create a revitalized truancy process that included a comprehensive, therapeutic approach to truancy by assigning services and monitoring school attendance compliance. Truancy was identified as a predicate/indicator for both juvenile delinquency and dependency, so the effort naturally included collaboration at regular monthly meetings that included school officials, School Resource Officers, counseling providers, the court system and

judicial leadership, the state attorney, guardians ad litem, and staff from the Department of Children and Families.

Current outcomes include substantial revision of court processes to initiate services and provide an ongoing review of school attendance, and Involvement and coordination of community services to address truancy and to support the efforts of the school system. Other outcomes include: review hearings; community resources previously unknown have been identified, better data are now collected; and community collaboration is enhanced.

**“Project ONE makes the vision clear to local courts that one family does need to have all cases coordinated and pull in all the effective services.”**

**Lead Judge from Project ONE site team**

## **RENO, NV**

### **Video Conferencing for Crossover Youth Hearings**

Washoe County purchased equipment for video-conferencing and created a protocol so one judicial officer could hear cases involving “cross-over” youth. These youth, who are involved in both the juvenile justice and dependency systems, were identified by the existing Crossover Youth Project and Project ONE team. The new video conferencing system went through four weeks of preparation and testing, being coordinated with the court’s technology department, court clerks, judicial officers, juvenile probation, social services and public agency attorneys. While challenges exist, the quality of communication among stakeholders improved in advance of the hearings. Video-conferencing makes it easier for families by alleviating transportation to different courts. The court believes that, with better coordination between the juvenile justice and dependency systems, it can prevent youth from penetrating further into either system.

## **NEW ORLEANS, LA**

### **Family Involvement in the Project ONE Collaborative**

Orleans Parish Juvenile Court believes that families can serve as an integral part in helping improve the court because families are most affected by court decisions. Family members are invited to Project ONE meetings so they can provide input and help the court identify its strengths and weaknesses and how to move forward collectively. To engage families, court program case managers identified those parents who expressed strong concern about their child’s well-being and their court involvement, and who would be willing and available to participate in monthly Project ONE meetings. Transportation is provided to the families who participate in the Project ONE meetings. The initiative is only getting started but already the court has learned a valuable lesson—to recruit families while they are still involved in their own court case, and show them that they can help other families get through their cases.

### **Court User Survey**

The Orleans Parish Juvenile Court (OPJC) developed a court user survey with NCJFCJ, then modified it to gain insight into experiences families were having using the court system. OPJC plans to partner with a local university to create a student intern position to administer the survey, as well as recruit participants, and collect and enter data. The survey uses a Likert scale to rate how strongly participants agree/disagree with statements about a range of topics, such as forms being clear, the courthouse feeling safe, being treated with courtesy, whether procedures were explained, etc. Other data will also

be collected to help analyze and improve the court experience. OPJC is in the process of figuring out the best ways the information can be put to use to improve the court.

## DADE CITY, FL

### **Changing a Child's Stars: Finding Ways to Reach Their Potential through a Comprehensive Educational and Therapeutic Approach**

Recognizing that many children are adversely impacted by trauma, and that trauma can pose great challenges to learning, Dade City formed a collaborative group to investigate, formulate, and implement a special school that practices trauma-informed care. Building on interest in the community to better serve youth impacted by trauma in their lives, the Hon. Lynn Tepper introduced the concept of a community trauma school to the community, setting up committees for curriculum, fundraising, and building partnerships. The community continues to work on developing a "One Door" school for families in need of extensive services. In addition to offering a trauma-informed environment for all students by providing training for all staff, parents, and caregivers, the school will also provide career tracks or exposure to creative, technological and vocational fields. Substance abuse, mental health counseling, health care, life-skills training, evidence-based parent training, adult education, nutrition and other community services will be available on-site for the entire family. Expected outcomes include: Trauma needs will be met within the school community; a decrease of suspensions and expulsions; keeping at-risk families intact; and increased family involvement in the community.

**"Collaborative success for the families we serve requires significant effort and leadership by judges."**

**Lead Judge from Project ONE site team**

## CONCLUSION

The inaugural All-Sites meeting created an atmosphere that allowed for the sites to share their experiences, knowledge, and consult with other jurisdictions around the country. This cross-system sharing of promising practices improves court processes and encourages better outcomes for children and families on the local, state, and national levels. The Project ONE sites are true pioneers in creating significant reform efforts being instituted in each of their respective jurisdictions. The NCJFCJ is privileged to work with these judicial champions and their stakeholder teams, and look forward to future All-Sites meetings and vigorous growth of this important project.