

## Washington's Court Improvement Program – Federal Grant FY 2023 System Partner Information

### **Background**

The [Family & Youth Justice Programs](#) at the Administrative Office of the Courts administers Washington State's Court Improvement Program (CIP). The CIP provides federal funds to each state's judicial branch for the purpose of promoting continuous quality improvement of:

- Child welfare court hearings and reviews;
- Legal representation for parents, children, youth and the state child welfare agency; and
- Collaboration between the judicial branch, the child welfare agency, and tribes to improve child welfare outcomes.

AOC staff work closely with child welfare system partners to deliver high-quality trainings and system improvement projects, and to provide useful data to assess court performance and improve equity and outcomes for children and families.

Annually, state CIPs work with child welfare agencies, tribes and system partners to develop the CIP grant application. Washington's FY 2023 CIP application is due June 30, 2022. The application includes:

- A self-assessment review of CIP efforts undertaken in FY 2022 and
- An updated five-year Strategic Plan that reflects how grant funds will be used to identify and implement approaches to ensure continuous quality improvement.

### **Developing Washington's FY 2023 CIP Plan**

We welcome your input as we develop the CIP work plan for FY 2023, which will cover October 1, 2022, through September 30, 2023. This plan is a key part of Washington's CIP annual grant application.

In our grant application, we are required to describe the plan and implementation steps for a minimum of three projects:

1. a project to continuously improve the quality of child welfare court hearings and reviews;
2. a project to continuously improve the quality of legal representation for parents, children and youth or the child welfare agency; and
3. a joint project with the title IV-B/IV-E agency to improve specific safety, permanency, or well-being outcomes as identified through the CFSR or other CQI process.

Building on our current CIP work, we have identified the following required projects for FY 2023.

**Hearing Quality Project:** A hearing quality evaluation, conducted by Dr. Alicia Summers, will assess how judicial practice changes as a result of judicial officer participation in the 2022 Reasonable Efforts and Active Efforts Judicial Academy. Based on the results of the evaluation and consultation

with participating judicial officers, we plan to identify additional trainings, resources, tools and system changes needed to support judicial officers so that they can engage in quality reasonable and active efforts inquiries, with child-specific findings. Information about the 2022 Judicial Academy is available [here](#).

**Quality Legal Representation Project:** Develop and deliver a Washington State Reasonable Efforts and Active Efforts Academy for attorneys who represent parents, children/youth, child advocates and DCYF. Similar to the judicial academy, CIP will bring state experts together with national experts affiliated with the Capacity Building Center for Courts to tailor the program to Washington State. As a result of participating in this training academy, attorneys will be prepared to make arguments on behalf of their client on reasonable and active efforts and reason to know issues at appropriate hearings. Attorneys will understand what information is needed by judicial officers and their role in providing that information, and improve their ability to authentically engage while advocating for their clients both in- and out of court.

**Safety Project:** Expand on the success of the [Safety Summit Project](#) conducted in FY 2022, where CIP, DCYF and other system partners supported cross-system child safety trainings and strategic action planning in seven counties. Informed by the results from the post-intervention Safety Decision-Making Practice evaluation, to be completed early summer 2022, CIP staff will collaborate with the multi-disciplinary Safety Summit State Team to develop a safety training eco-system that will increase fidelity to safety framework practices system wide, including in the following areas:

- Assessment of safety in the home (safety threats, child vulnerability, and protective capacity)
- Safety planning (in-home and out-of-home)
- Conditions for return home
- Family time plans and decisions (HB 1194 implementation)
- Case planning
- Evaluating progress and compliance

Additional projects that may be included in the FY 2023 Strategic Plan include:

- Support for effective hybrid court operations
  - Building on the learnings from the COVID Recovery Project, which involves analysis of court data and interviews with system partners, develop resources and target court improvement support to help court communities increase access to justice, improve timeliness measures and support better outcomes for families and professionals.
  - Draft court rule to allow flexibility for parents, children and court participants to appear remotely for hearings, along with recommendations for best practices for remote hearings.
  - Help court communities utilize resources, such as short instructional videos for families and court participants to reduce technology challenges and increase effective participation in remote hearings.

- ICWA/Tribal Court Collaboration
  - Create ICWA and Tribal Advisory Group
  - Develop Washington-centered ICWA bench card and other materials for judicial officers – incorporate Reason to Know and Active Efforts sections of the [legal resource guide](#) developed for the 2022 Judicial Academy.
  - Support local courts to develop ICWA Courts or dockets and/or partner with tribes and tribal courts – building on the ICWA Court Summit that was held in Fall 2021. Share what is learned with other interested court communities.

### ***Schedule***

A partner feedback meeting will be held on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 12pm – 1:30pm, to engage and discuss these and other CIP project ideas with our system partners. We also welcome your comments and ideas at any time.

The full grant application is due on June 30, 2022.

Please contact Kelly Warner-King ([Kelly.warner-king@courts.wa.gov](mailto:Kelly.warner-king@courts.wa.gov)) for more information or to provide email feedback on the CIP plan.