



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

# MEDIA ADVISORY

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*Court Officials to Testify before State House Committee on Children and Youth*  
**Supreme Court Initiative to Improve Lives  
of Dependent Children Shows Early Progress**

**HARRISBURG, August 26, 2009** – On Thursday, August 27 at 11:40 am in Room 60, E-Wing of the State Capitol Building, Sandra Moore, Administrator of the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts’ Office of Children & Families in the Court is scheduled to testify before the State House Committee on Children and Youth regarding the Supreme Court’s statewide initiative to improve the lives of dependent children.

**Your coverage is invited.** The hearing begins at 10 am.

The Court’s initiative, known as “The Permanency Practice Initiative,” strives to safely:

- Reduce the number of children adjudicated as dependents and in court-ordered placement
- Reduce the time children spend in the foster care system
- Reduce the number of children who re-enter care
- Reduce the dependency court caseload
- Reduce the cost of children in care
- Reduce the need for residential and institutional placements, and
- Increase child placement stability.

Also testifying with Sandra Moore will be **Dauphin County** Common Pleas, Dependency and Orphan’s Court Judge Todd Hoover; **Dauphin County** Commissioner George Hartwick, III; **Allegheny County** Children’s Court Administrator Cindy Stoltz and **Chester County** Department of Children and Youth and Families Director Keith Hayes.

“The early results of our efforts are very promising,” Moore said. “We are finding additional extended family members who are becoming lifelong connections for the dependent children and counties are already beginning to report reductions in the number of children in foster care.

“By quickly moving dependent children into permanent family settings, we not only significantly improve their chances to succeed; we significantly reduce the cost of institutional care for the counties, thus saving tax dollars for other valuable county children and family services.”

# # #

*Editor’s Note: The hearing agenda and additional background information are attached.*

## **BACKGROUND**

The Permanency Practice Initiative focuses on three practice areas: Family Finding, Family Group Decision Making and Family Development Credentialing.

**Family Finding** provides professionals with the tools they need to help find relatives and others committed to a child achieving permanency for every child faster and more efficiently.

**Pennsylvania Family Group Decision Making** process is designed to join the wider family group, including relatives, friends, community members, and others, in collectively making decisions to resolve an identified family concern.

**Family Development Credentialing** is designed to be an interagency training for staff from all public, private and non-profit service systems. The program teaches the skills to help front line workers become more effective in assisting individuals and families in taking care of themselves and becoming self-sufficient.

In addition to the Permanency Practice Initiative a series of rules changes designed to speed the appellate process for children living in unstable or impermanent homes were implemented by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania in March 2009. In June 2009, the Court released a mission statement and set of guiding principles aimed at improving the lives of abused and neglected children whose care is entrusted the child dependency system.

The Supreme Court's efforts are led by Sandy Moore, Administrator of the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts' Office of Children & Families in the Court (OCFC) in close partnership with the state Department of Public Welfare's Office of Children, Youth & Families. Additional support and guidance for the initiative is provided by The Pennsylvania Family Group Decision Making Statewide Leadership Team, the Statewide Adoption Permanency Network, the Community Action Association of Pennsylvania, and the University of Pittsburgh's School of Social Work and Child Welfare Training Program.

The OCFC, created in October 2006 by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, is funded with federal grants from the Court Improvement Project run by the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. State Supreme Court Justice Max Baer, a former administrative judge of family court in Allegheny County is guiding these efforts on behalf of the Supreme Court. OCFC can be reached at 717-795-2685.

AGENDA FOR PUBLIC HEARING  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH  
THURSDAY, AUGUST 27, 2009  
ROOM 60 E-WING

FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION INITIATIVES

- 10 - 10:10            Opening Remarks  
                         Representative Louise Williams Bishop, Chairwoman  
                         Representative Dennis M. O'Brien, Minority Chair
- 10:10 - 10:30    Secretary Estelle Richman, Department of Public Welfare
- Federal changes in foster care and adoption in 2008  
                         Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act  
                         How PA is implementing the changes.
- National Governor's Association Project and the PA Supreme Court's  
                         Permanency Practice Initiative
- 10:30 - 10:40    Joan Benso, President and CEO Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children  
                         Porch Light Project
- 10:40 - 10:55    County Initiatives to Implement Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing  
                         Adoptions Act of 2008
- Honorable Pam Tokar-Ickes, Commissioner, Somerset County,  
                         County Commissioners' Association of Pennsylvania
- George Kovarie, President, PA Children and Youth Administrators Association  
                         and Executive Director, Berks County Children and Youth Services
- 10:55 - 11:40    National Governor's Association Project in 5 Counties
- York County:* Beverly Mackereth, Executive Director Human Services Division
- Luzerne County:* Joe Devizio, Executive Director Human Services Division
- Montgomery County:* Laurie O'Connor, Executive Director Office of Children  
                         and Youth
- Philadelphia County:* Anne Marie Ambrose, Commissioner, Department  
                         Human Services
- Clarion County:* Kay Rupert, Executive Director Children and Youth Services
- 11:40 - 11:50    Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, Permanency Practice Initiative  
                         Sandra E. Moore, Administrator Office of Children and Families in the Courts  
                         Administrative Office of PA Supreme Court (AOPC)

11:50 - 12:25 Permanency Practice Initiative in 3 Counties

*Dauphin County:* Honorable George Hartwick, III, Commissioner

*Dauphin County:* Honorable Todd Hoover, Court of Common Pleas,  
Dependency and Orphan's Court

*Allegheny County:* Cindy Stoltz, Administrator Children's Court

*Chester County:* Keith Hayes, Director Department of Children and Youth  
and Families

12:25 - 12:30 Concluding remarks