

<b>ACF</b>  Administration  For Children  And Families	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES Administration for Children and Families	
	<b>1. Log No:</b> ACYF-CB-PI-16-05	<b>2. Issuance Date:</b> TBD, 2019
	<b>3. Originating Office:</b> Children's Bureau	
	<b>4. Key Words:</b> State Court Improvement Program Basic, Training and Data Grants	

**PROGRAM INSTRUCTION**

- TO:** Highest State Courts of Appeal
- SUBJECT:** Instructions for State Courts Applying for Court Improvement Program (CIP) Funds for Fiscal Years (FYs) through 2021.
- REFERENCES:** Section 438 of the Social Security Act, as amended by Public Law (P.L.) 115-123 Family First Prevention Services Act, enacted February 9, 2018 and P.L. 115-271
- PURPOSE:** The purpose of this Program Instruction is to set forth the eligibility requirements and grant application procedures for the basic, data and training CIP grants through FY 2021 and to provide guidance on the requirements for state courts to continuously assess and improve the handling of court proceedings related to child welfare and enhance collaboration with title IV-E/IV-B agencies and tribes.

**Paperwork Reduction Act**

Under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (P.L. 104-13), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Control Number. The OMB control number for this collection is 0970-0307 and it expires XX/XX/XXXX. The estimated time to complete the CIP Complete Application is 52 hours.

**BACKGROUND:** Section 438 of the Social Security Act authorized the CIP to fund three grants that the highest state court of each state can apply for: a basic grant, data grant, and training grant. The basic grant enables state courts to conduct assessments of the role, responsibilities and effectiveness of state courts in carrying out state laws relating to child welfare proceedings. It also allows state courts to make improvements to provide for the safety, well-being, and permanence of children in foster care and assist in the implementation of Program Improvement Plans (PIPs) as a result of the Child and Family Services and title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Reviews.

The data grant supports state court data collection and analysis and promotes data sharing between state courts, child welfare agencies and tribes. The training grant was intended to increase child welfare expertise within the legal community and facilitate cross-training opportunities among agencies, tribes, courts and other key stakeholders.

**INFORMATION: Organization of the Program Instruction:**

- Section I. Instruction
- Section II. Programmatic Requirements for CIP Grants
- Section III. Strategic Plan Requirements
- Section IV. Application Requirements
- Section V. Annual Self-Assessment Process Requirements
- Section VI. Annual Fiscal Reporting Requirements

**I. INSTRUCTION**

This Program Instruction describes the application procedures and reporting requirements for the basic CIP grant through FY2021, and explains how state courts must plan, implement, amend, update and report on the programs and activities they support using grant funds. State courts must comply with the requirements delineated in this Program Instruction as a prerequisite to receiving CIP funds.

**Eligibility**

The highest state court of each state that participates in the programs funded under title IV-E of the Act is eligible to apply for CIP funds. The term “highest state court” means the judicial tribunal that is the ultimate court of appeals in the state and responsible for the implementation of the CIP grants. Although the highest state court is the designated applicant for the grant, the application must reflect meaningful and ongoing collaboration among state and local courts, state and local child welfare agencies and, where applicable, Indian tribes.

A state court may apply for one, two or all three CIP grants. It is not necessary for a state to receive the basic CIP grant to be eligible to receive either the data or training grant.

### **Funding**

- Allotments: For each grant, each state court with an approved application will be allotted \$85,000 and, after the sum of all states' base amounts is subtracted from the total appropriation, a percentage of the remainder based on the state's proportionate share of children under age 21. (See Section 438(c) of the Act.) Estimated allotments for FY 2017 are based on the FY 2016 allotments for each of the three grants and included as Attachment E of this document. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) will issue estimated allotments annually through FY-2021.
- Project Period: Each state court must obligate its federal funds by the end of the following fiscal year, with an additional 90 days to liquidate any outstanding obligations. ACF does not have the authority to grant an extension of a program expenditure period. Any funds remaining unobligated or un-liquidated by the respective deadlines will be recouped by ACF and returned to the U.S. Treasury through the issuance of a negative grant award.
- Cost Sharing Requirement: A non-federal share is required for each CIP grant at the rate of 25 percent of the total budget (1/3 of the Federal share). For example, a project totaling \$100,000 would require a state court contribution of \$25,000 to receive federal funds totaling \$75,000. Funds eligible to be used as non-federal share must meet the regulatory provisions of 45 CFR 75.306, which establishes the rules for cost sharing.

In accordance with these provisions, funds eligible to be used as non-Federal share, among other things:

- Must not be Federal grant funds, unless specifically allowed by Federal statute;
- Must not be used to match any other Federal grant;
- Must be used for costs that are otherwise allowable (i.e. the non-Federal share, like the Federal share must also be used for the purposes described in Section 438 of the Act and this program instruction);
- May originate with a third party, public or non-public; and
- May be in-kind contributions of services, equipment, or property.

- Indirect Costs: If a state court wishes to receive reimbursement for indirect costs within its allotment as a part of a CIP grant, it must have an approved indirect cost rate with the cognizant Federal agency. The cognizant Federal agency is that Federal agency that provides the most funds to the state court. If a state court has not been assigned a cognizant agency, it should work with the Federal agency from which it receives the largest amount of funds to negotiate and receive approval of indirect cost proposals.
- Drawdown of Funds from the Payment Management System: In accordance with P.L. 101-510, any grant funds that have been expended within the two-year program expenditure period must be drawn down within five years from the fiscal year for which the funds were awarded (e.g., FY 2013 funds must be drawn down by no later than September 30, 2017). Requests for adjustments/revisions to the Payment Management account after five years will not be approved.

## **II. PROGRAMMATIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CIP GRANTS**

The purpose of the CIP is to promote the continuous quality improvement of: (1) dependency court hearings and reviews; (2) legal representation for parents, children, youth and the IV-E/IV-B agency; and (3) collaboration between the judicial branch of state government, the title IV-E/IV-B agency and tribes to improve child welfare outcomes.

### **a. Meaningful and Ongoing Collaboration**

State courts are required to demonstrate “meaningful, ongoing collaboration” among the courts in the state, the title IV-B/IV-E agency, and where applicable, Indian Tribes in their CIP applications in order to receive funding (Section 438(b)(1)(C) of the Act.) “Meaningful, ongoing collaboration” means that: state courts, title IV-B/IV-E agencies, and tribes will identify and work toward shared goals and activities to increase the safety, permanency, and well-being of children in the child welfare system.

To satisfy this requirement, state courts must: (1) establish and operate a statewide multi-disciplinary task force to guide and contribute to CIP activities; and (2) create and describe a process by which they will work with the title IV-B/IV-E agency, and tribal partners, to jointly review and discuss child welfare outcome data and meaningfully participate in child welfare program planning and improvement efforts on an ongoing basis.

### **i. Statewide Multidisciplinary Task Force**

State courts must form a statewide multidisciplinary task force which includes, state and local courts, the state title IV-B/IV-E agency, and where applicable, Indian tribes or tribal consortiums. State courts are strongly encouraged to include the following representatives from title IV-B/IV-E agency on the task force:

- the agency administrator,
- the quality assurance/continuous quality improvement lead,
- the Child and Family Service Plan (CFSP)/Annual Progress Services Report (APSR) lead,
- permanency division director,
- agency attorney,
- the training lead, and,
- tribal child welfare or Indian Child Welfare Act specialist

The CB expects that representatives from the agency will be individuals who are involved in child welfare program planning and improvement efforts (CFSP, APSR, CQI/QA, and CFSR processes), have decision making authority, and are equipped to participate in discussion of how CIPs can become more meaningfully involved in these processes and ensure action. State courts must provide an especially strong rationale in their grant application for not including the above identified agency representatives as task force members.

In addition to mandatory agency representation, other important, members include representatives of: parent's counsel/bar; children's attorneys and/or guardians ad litem; other related Children's Bureau grantees in the state (including, the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) lead, the Children's Justice Act state lead, and where applicable, representatives of discretionary grants such as Regional Partnership Grantees and or the Community Collaborations to Improve Child Welfare Outcomes grantees), CASA programs; the mental health/behavioral health treatment provider community; the substance abuse treatment provider community state departments of education, substance abuse, and mental health; other relevant state departments or agencies; relevant county agencies; local school districts, neighboring tribal court and indian child welfare leaders, and last, but not least, foster care alumni and parents with lived foster care experience.

State courts are strongly encouraged to convene the task force quarterly. Task force meetings should include joint review and discussion of child welfare outcome data , data that may be available from court data systems

(including toolkit measures<sup>1</sup>) and discussion of what those data may mean and how court or attorney practice may be contributing to such data. Meetings shall be used as an opportunity to monitor and review goals, identify opportunities for interventions and plan CIP involvement in program planning and improvement efforts with the title IV-E/IV-B agency.

State courts must provide an especially strong rationale in their grant application for holding meetings less than quarterly.

## **ii. Collaboration with Title IV-B/IV-E Agency and Tribes**

State courts must demonstrate collaboration with the title IV-B/IV-E agency and Indian tribes in applications for CIP funding by describing how the title IV-B/IV-E agency and tribes, where applicable, will be involved in CIP planning, including:

- identifying needs;
- developing theories of change;
- selecting or developing solutions;
- planning, preparing and implementing change; and
- evaluating and applying findings.

State courts must also commit to participating in all stages of child welfare program planning and improvement efforts, including the CFSP/APSR, CFSR and title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Review processes within required timeframes.<sup>2</sup>

Collaboration should result in institutional and infrastructural changes that lead to measurably improved outcomes for the children and families that the State is serving. The state court and the title IV-B/IV-E agency should meet regularly to examine the state's and court's data in order to establish activities for both the court and agency to target improvement. Areas that could be examined include reducing removals, improving placement stability or increasing the number of children that achieve timely reunification, adoptions or guardianships.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Court Performance Measures in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases* (commonly known as the "Toolkit"). The Toolkit is a set of resources developed by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the National Center on State Courts, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and the American Bar Association's Center on Children and the Law in 2008. See <http://www.ojjdp.gov/publications/courttoolkit.html>.

<sup>2</sup> It is also important to note that there is a corresponding State agency requirement to demonstrate collaboration with State courts. Specifically, State child welfare agencies must demonstrate substantial, ongoing and meaningful collaboration with State courts in the development and implementation of their State plans under titles IV-B and IV-E and any PIPs developed as a result of the Child and Family Services and IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Reviews. See Section 422(b)(13) of the Act.

An example of collaborating with tribes include establishing and regularly convening a state and tribal court workgroup to examine ICWA practice and state and tribal court collaboration on Indian child welfare matters. The group may conduct or oversee an ICWA assessment, work to implement the Bureau of Indian Affairs ICWA Regulations<sup>4</sup>, and develop and implement plans to continuously improve ICWA practice.

CB strongly encourages grantees to work the title IV-E/IV-B agency to collect and share critical data important to understanding ICWA practice, including, but not limited to

- identification of indian children;
- notice to tribes;
- tribal participation as parties in hearings involving indian children;
- tribal intervention in dependency cases;
- transfer of ICWA cases to tribal courts; and
- placement of indian children according to tribal preferences.

### **b. CIP Projects and Activities**

Minimally, state courts applying for CIP grants must plan for and implement three projects: a project to continuously improve the quality of dependency court hearings and reviews, a project to continuously improve the quality of legal representation for parents, children and youth and/or the child welfare agency, and a joint project with the title IV-E/IV-B agency to improve specific safety, permanency, or well-being outcomes as identified through the CFSR or other CQI process.

- (1) A project to continuously improve the quality of dependency court, shelter care/emergency hearings, permanency hearings and permanency reviews. Given the importance of initial appearances (shelter care and emergency hearings) as demonstrated through the research, CB strongly encourages projects to include a special emphasis on the quality of those hearings., .

CB further strongly encourages all grantees to ensure hearing quality projects include an enhanced focus on the quality of reasonable efforts

---

<sup>3</sup> New joint guidance from the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services about implementation of the foster care provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is available at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/index.html>.

<sup>4</sup> The final regulations can be found at <http://www.indianaffairs.gov/WhoWeAre/BIA/OIS/HumanServices/IndianChildWelfareAct/index.htm>.

determinations required under the law, specifically, reasonable efforts to prevent removal at initial appearances and reasonable efforts to finalize the permanency goal in permanency hearings. This emphasis centers on the factual basis on which reasonable efforts determinations are made as opposed to simply measuring whether the determinations are made. Rather than a simple yes or no question and response, the inquiry contains a strong qualitative component, requiring judicial officers to inquire what the IV-E/IV-B agency has done to make reasonable efforts.

State courts are required to share the results of such efforts in a timely, ongoing fashion with the title IV-E/IV-B agency to help support the case review systemic factor of Round 4 of the CFSR, PIPs, title-IV foster care eligibility reviews, and ongoing joint CQI/QA work. A list of potential indicators of quality hearings and reviews is included in the appendix as attachment A.

State courts are encouraged to consider all of the below data sources and methodologies in designing plans.

- Data from statewide and local court databases, where available;
- Data from the state title IV-B/IV-E agency pertaining to court-involved children and families including data available through state child welfare information systems, CFSR Data, National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, and National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)<sup>5</sup>;
- Manual data collection activities:
  - Periodic court observation using a standardized protocol;
  - Periodic court file review using a standardized protocol;
  - Judicial and attorney individual interviews, focus groups or surveys;
  - Agency and stakeholder interviews, focus groups or surveys.

(2) A project to continuously improve the quality<sup>6</sup> of legal representation for parents, children and youth, and the title IV-E/IV-B agency at all stages of child welfare proceedings.

---

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/research-data-technology/reporting-systems/nytd>

<sup>6</sup> See [ACF-ACYF-CB-IM-17-02](#) for more information.



CB strongly encourages grantees to pilot and work toward implementing statewide models of legal representation for parents, children and youth that require specialization in child welfare law through ongoing training and/or certification and incorporate multi-disciplinary teaming approaches such as the pairing of a well-trained child welfare attorney with a social worker. Evidence of the value of multi-disciplinary models of legal representation and its association with expedited permanency and other positive outcomes continues to grow.<sup>7</sup>

CB further encourages grantees to work with the title IV-E/IV-B agency to maximize access to title IV-E funding<sup>8</sup> to support high quality legal representation for parents, children and youth and to promote robust, ongoing training for judges, attorneys for parents, children and youth, and the title IV-E/IV-B agency attorneys as professional partner training under title IV-E training plans.

- (3) A joint project with the title IV-E/IV-B agency to improve a specific safety, permanency, or well-being outcome or outcomes. State courts are required to plan and implement a joint project with the title IV-E/IV-B agency that will focus on improving a specific safety, permanency, or well-being outcome. The plan must identify the specific outcome(s) that will be addressed and the specific measures that will be used to track progress and ensure continuous quality improvement. The plan must also identify the data that were used to identify the selected outcome as a priority.

Joint projects designed to that engage the legal and judicial community in enhancing community-based prevention<sup>9</sup> efforts to strengthen families, address family vulnerability and help reduce the need for removal to foster care are strongly encouraged.

---

<sup>7</sup> See "Effects of an Interdisciplinary Approach to Parental Representation in Child Welfare," by Lucas A. Gerber, Yuk C. Pang, Timothy Ross, Martin Guggenheim, Peter J. Pecora, and Joel Miller (*Children and Youth Services Review*, 102), is available at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S019074091930088X>.

<sup>8</sup> In December of 2018, CB revised policy to allow the title IV-E agency to claim title IV-E administrative costs of independent legal representation by an attorney for a child who is a candidate for title IV-E foster care or in foster care, and his/her parents to prepare for and participate in court proceedings. This change in policy will help ensure that, among other things, reasonable efforts are made to prevent removal and finalize the permanency plan, parents and youth are engaged in and understand their case plan, and compliance with case plans progress is appropriately reported. [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cwpm/public\\_html/programs/cb/laws\\_policies/laws/cwpm/policy\\_dsp.jsp?citID=36](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cwpm/public_html/programs/cb/laws_policies/laws/cwpm/policy_dsp.jsp?citID=36)

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, Information Memorandum [ACYF-CB-IM-18-05](#).

### c. Continuous Quality Improvement and Change Management

The previous program instruction for the CIP<sup>10</sup> introduced continuous quality improvement (CQI) as the common approach for CIP work. CQI is a cyclical process used to identify, inform, monitor and improve progress toward outcomes in an ongoing fashion. The CQI framework provides an opportunity to meaningfully examine projects and activities to ensure resources are used in an efficient and effective manner and that interventions have their desired effect. CQI is a change management process that includes multiple steps or phases. To advance individual work and collective learning, state courts are required to use the following steps to guide court centered and collaborative work:

- **Identify and assess needs.** Before diving into a project or activity it is important to take time to intentionally identify and assess the problem or need. To ensure a well-rounded perspective, teams of relevant stakeholders should be formed to discuss the need and guide the work. These teams may be composed of CIP task-force members, but may also require additional expertise.

It is important to explore existing data and gather additional data to help understand the problem in more depth, to better identify who or what is most affected by the problem, and discern what information is already available to think about the need. The state child welfare agency collects and reports on a host of measures for each state annually through the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and the NCANDS. NYTD<sup>11</sup> is another data source with important data on outcomes for older youth remaining in or exiting care.

Many measures calculable from these data systems can help state courts dig deeper into their own data and better understand the safety and permanency of children and youth in foster care and begin discerning how court and attorney action may impact both. CIPs are strongly encouraged to expand their use of existing child welfare administrative data

- **Develop a theory of change.** Following the data gathering phase, it is important to develop a theory of change. The theory of change identifies theoretical root causes of a problem and how they can be resolved with an intervention. A theory of change links outcomes to

---

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/pi1202>

<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/research-data-technology/reporting-systems/nytd>

proposed activities and explains both how and why a desired change is expected to occur.

- ***Select and adapt or develop a solution.*** Once a problem or need has been clearly identified and defined, it is time to explore solutions. It is important to take the time to research and consider interventions that already exist, including what has worked in other jurisdictions. Research should inform decisions, particularly if interventions or similar practices have been implemented elsewhere and have evidence to support their effectiveness. Selecting the appropriate intervention depends on needs, resources, and feasibility. Any intervention selected should be adapted to meet the unique needs of the state/jurisdiction. If no available interventions exist, consider designing and testing one to best meet the needs of the program.
- ***Plan, prepare and implement an intervention or change.*** Implementation is most successful when done following a strong and specific implementation plan and where a site is ready to change. An honest assessment of readiness with a site should always be conducted prior to determining if it is appropriate to implement the effort. Capacity should be built within the site to ensure resources and supports are available to sustain the intervention. Then, the intervention (e.g., program or practice) should be piloted or tested.
- ***Evaluate and apply findings.*** Changes in practice or implementation of new interventions should be monitored and evaluated to understand if they are achieving their intended effect. Data should be collected on implementation or fidelity of the new practice to ensure it is being implemented as expected. Evaluation efforts should measure both the quality of the intervention (how it is being implemented) and the effects of the intervention, both immediate (how it changes practice) and long-term (how it affects outcomes for families or youth). Data from monitoring and evaluation should drive decision-making about modification, continuation, or expansion of the intervention. Appendix B includes a list of questions to consider for each of the above steps.

### **III. STRATEGIC PLAN REQUIREMENTS**

To ensure thoughtful program and project management, state courts are required to create and submit a five-year strategic plan that identifies outcomes a state court will address and the projects and activities that they will undertake to achieve them. Strategic plans are intended to be a tool that guides CIP work. Strategic plans are living documents that should be

updated as needed to reflect self-assessment results and CQI efforts. Strategic plans must clearly articulate what the state court intends to achieve and how. An updated strategic plan must be submitted to CB annually for review, discussion, and approval. The strategic plan template is attached as appendix C. The strategic plan submitted with the 2017 application should focus on basic grant activities only.

#### **IV. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS**

To receive funds for FY 2022, State courts must complete and submit an application including all of the requirements detailed below on June 30, 2021. The application must identify which of the three CIP grants the state court is requesting, subject to the availability of funds. New applications will not be required for States that receive CIP grants in FY 2017 until the close of FY 2021. Annual awards will be contingent on a showing of program progress and are subject to the availability of funds.

##### **Applications for FY 2017 CIP Grants**

To receive funding for FY 2017, state courts must submit a complete application containing the below components by **June 30, 2021, 2016.**

1. A letter from the highest state court requesting funding for each of the CIP grants desired for FYs 2022-2027, including assurances that:
  - a. the court has in effect a rule requiring state courts to ensure that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of a child in foster care under the responsibility of the state are notified of any proceeding held with respect to the child and are afforded the right to be heard;
  - b. the court will share all relevant data stemming from CIP projects and data collection efforts with the title IV-E/IV-B agency for purposes of joint child welfare program planning and improvement efforts;
  - c. at least one representative per each CIP grant received (with a maximum of six reps per State) will attend the annual CIP Grantee Meeting each year funding is received; and
  - d. the court will pursue cross-training opportunities with the title IV-E/IV-B agency, tribes, and other important stakeholders including working to utilize professional partner training for judges, attorneys and court personnel.
  - e. the court will work with the title IV-E/IV-B agency to consider options for accessing title IV-E reimbursement to ensure high quality legal representation for parents, children and youth in child welfare proceedings.

2. A letter of support from the state agency administering the title IV-B and IV-E programs that assures:
  - a. ongoing, high-level agency participation on the CIP Multidisciplinary Statewide Taskforce, including task force meetings, planning and improvement efforts, and attendance of the annual CIP grantee meeting;
  - b. full and ongoing inclusion of the state court/CIP in child welfare program planning and improvement efforts, including the APSR/CFSP, CQI/QA, CFSR, and title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Review and program improvement processes;
  - c. timely and ongoing data sharing with the state court/CIP of all relevant child welfare data for purposes of program planning and continuously quality improvement of the child welfare system;
  - d. the agency will pursue cross-training opportunities with the state court/CIP including working to utilize professional partner training for judges, attorneys and court personnel; and,
  - e. the agency will work with the administrative office of the courts to consider options for accessing title IV-E reimbursement to ensure high quality legal representation for parents, children and youth in child welfare proceedings.
  
3. A list of the members of the statewide multidisciplinary taskforce including the:
  - a. name of the member;
  - b. professional affiliation, and title.
  
4. In a case where the recommended state agency participants are not included on the statewide multi-disciplinary team, the state court must provide narrative explanation and rationale for not including the identified members.
  
5. For the basic grant plan to continuously monitor and improve the quality of dependency court proceedings, including court hearings and reviews.
  
6. For the basic grant a plan for a joint, data-driven project with the child welfare agency.
  
7. For the data collection and analysis grant a description of how courts and child welfare agencies on the local and state levels will collaborate and jointly plan for the collection and sharing of all relevant data and information to demonstrate how improved case tracking and analysis of child abuse and neglect cases will produce safe and timely permanency decisions.

8. For the training grant, a description of how a portion of the grant will be used for cross-training with the title IV-E/IV-B agency.
9. A budget narrative.
10. A proposed five year strategic plan that reflects use of the basic grant funds only and incorporates identified approaches to ensure continuous quality improvement. Should funding become available for the CIP data and training grants in the future, CB will request state courts to amend their strategic plans to incorporate additional projects and activities to be supported by these grants.
11. Certifications:
  - a. An Anti-Lobbying Certification and Disclosure Form must be signed and submitted with the State's CIP application(s) pursuant to 45 CFR Part 93.100, and
  - b. If applicable, a SF-LLL, which discloses lobbying payments, also must be submitted.

The signature on the state court's CIP application by an authorized official attests to the applicant's intent to comply with each of the following certifications:<sup>12</sup>

- o Certification Regarding Drug-Free Work Place;
- o Debarment Certification; and
- o Certification Regarding Environmental Tobacco Smoke.

### **Submitting an Application**

State courts must submit applications in MS Word, via e-mail to the appropriate CB Regional Office (See Attachment F), David Kelly, Federal Project Officer, at [david.kelly@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:david.kelly@acf.hhs.gov) and Scott Trowbridge of the Child Welfare Capacity Building Center for Courts (CBCC) at [Scott.Trowbridge@americanbar.org](mailto:Scott.Trowbridge@americanbar.org). CB will approve applications that satisfy the requirements and purposes described at Section 438 of the Act and the requirements described in this Program Instruction.

### **V. ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS REQUIREMENTS**

CIPs are required to conduct an annual self-assessment to identify progress, challenges and areas in need of assistance. The purpose of the self-assessment process is to create an opportunity for CIPs to reflect on what they are doing, why they are doing it and to assess if efforts are achieving intended results. The self-assessment process is designed to help

---

<sup>12</sup> It is not necessary to include these certifications with the application.

shape and inform ongoing strategic planning and should include meaningful discussion with the multi-disciplinary task force and candid reflection of key CIP staff. A self-assessment template has been developed to assist with the process and is required to be submitted to the CB annually. The template and process are intended as important elements of CQI.

To promote joint planning with the title IV-E/IV-B agency and support integration of CIPs into child welfare planning and improvement efforts, annual self-assessments and strategic plan updates will be due at the same time as state CFSP/APSR submissions moving forward. The annual self-assessment, strategic plan and budget updates are due June 30<sup>th</sup> and should cover all activities from October 1<sup>st</sup>, identify work to be completed in the remainder of the federal fiscal year, and identify priorities for the next fiscal year. The strategic plan template is included in the appendix as attachment D.

State courts must submit self-assessments and strategic plan updates to the appropriate the CB Regional Office and the Federal Project Officer, David Kelly at [david.kelly@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:david.kelly@acf.hhs.gov), and Scott Trowbridge of the CBCC at [Scott.Trowbridge@americanbar.org](mailto:Scott.Trowbridge@americanbar.org).

CB will host individual calls with each CIP to review progress in meeting grant requirements, identified outcomes and to provide guidance and support at least annually.

## **VI. ANNUAL FISCAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

An interim financial report, covering the current fiscal year, must be submitted no later than 90 days following the end of the current Federal fiscal year. In addition, and in accordance with Federal regulations at 45 CFR 75.309(b), the final financial report, covering the entire obligation and liquidation periods, must be submitted no later than the last day of the liquidation period. Expenditures under the basic grants, data collection and analysis grants and the training grants must be reported on an SF-425 Financial Status Report. A separate report is required for each grant received. **State courts are required to file these reports electronically.**

### **Forms**

The following forms are available electronically at:  
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofs/grants/form.htm>

- SF-425
- Anti-Lobbying Certification and Disclosure Form
- Certification Regarding Drug-Free Work Place
- Debarment Certification

- Certification Regarding Environmental Tobacco Smoke

### **Resources for State Court Improvement Programs**

The Children’s Bureau’s National Child Welfare Capacity Building Center for Courts (CBCC) is designed to provide capacity building support to all CIPs.<sup>13</sup> The CBCC is composed of three organizations<sup>14</sup> with long histories of providing training and technical assistance to State courts. The CBCC has liaisons assigned to each state and the tribal CIPs, as well as research staff that are paired with each liaison. They work directly with CIP Directors, Coordinators and key staff to help CIPs incorporate CQI approaches into their work, assist with strategic planning and serve as thought partners as needed. In addition to direct work with individual CIPs, the CBCC also hosts a number of constituency groups composed of groups of CIPs that are interested in similar types of work and facilitates opportunities for group learning and peer-to-peer sharing through regularly scheduled online meetings, working sessions and discussions. The CBCC also develops non-jurisdictional ‘Universal’ products that support CIP work. These and contact information can be found here <http://capacity.childwelfare.gov/courts/>

**INQUIRIES TO:    CB Regional Offices**

/s/

[NAME]  
[Acting] Commissioner  
Administration on Children,  
Youth and Families

#### **Attachments:**

- A: Quality Hearing Indicators
- B: Self -Assessment Template
- C: Change Management Questions
- D: Strategic Plan Template
- E: FY 20209 Tentative Allocations for the Basic Court Improvement Program Grant

---

<sup>13</sup> See <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/courts/about-courts/>

<sup>14</sup> The CBCC is composed of the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and the National Center for State Courts.



F: CB Regional Office Program Manager Directory