

# The Dependency Outlook



THE OFFICE OF COURT IMPROVEMENT

Spring 2014; Edition IV

## Evidence-Based Parenting Initiative Moving Forward

Judge Katherine Essrig, chair of the Dependency Court Improvement Panel, announced at the 2013 Model Courts All-Sites meeting that the goal of the model courts project is statewide implementation of evidence-based parenting programs. Since that meeting, eight circuits have begun work on this initiative and are receiving targeted technical assistance. Of the eight pilot sites, many are still in the initial stages, exploring the various programs that are available; others have selected programs and are working with local providers to install the new programs in their communities.



Dr. Lynne Katz, Director  
University of Miami, Linda Ray Intervention Center

For all circuits, ongoing coaching and support will be critical to the success of this effort, and staff at the Office of Court Improvement (OCI) remain dedicated to supporting this project. To this end, OCI has entered into a professional services agreement with Dr. Lynne Katz (director of the University of Miami, Linda Ray Intervention Center), so she can provide the one-on-one technical assistance needed to move this project forward. Dr. Katz' considerable experience and expertise is proving to be a huge asset to the project, as she is working with each site to coach, support, and guide local implementation efforts. Judge Cindy Lederman from the 11<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit has also been, and continues to be, an invaluable resource for this initiative.

Enabling parenting providers to offer evidence-based programs is only part of the project; another key component involves Dr. Katz helping providers develop effective ways to convey information on parental progress to the judges and magistrates in the courtroom. The primary court-related activities that Dr. Katz will work on with providers are behavioral observations of parent-child dyads and templates for reporting ongoing progress to the court. Dr. Katz will also work with providers to ensure that parent-child interactive components are implemented and that site logistics are appropriate to accommodate these interactive activities. Judges and magistrates having pertinent information in court on parents' quantifiable progress in a program—as opposed to simply observing that a parent has received his or her certificate of completion for a course—is a crucial feature of this initiative. Clear, reliable information that is reported consistently will help judges make better-informed decisions in the cases they hear.

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## Evidence-Based Parenting Initiative, continued

In addition to the one-one-one technical assistance that Dr. Katz is providing each pilot site, there are standing monthly calls that provide the opportunity for all of the participating sites to ask questions, share challenges, and devise solutions. As these eight jurisdictions continue to move towards implementation, we hope that other circuits will come onboard as well. Working together, we can achieve the goal of statewide implementation of evidence-based parenting programs and, more importantly, ensure that families involved in the child welfare system have access to quality services that improve outcomes for children in care.

For additional information on this exciting project, please contact John Couch at [couchj@flcourts.org](mailto:couchj@flcourts.org).

## 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit Judge Receives the 2014 National CASA Award

Judge Cindy S. Lederman, Eleventh Judicial Circuit, Receives the 2014 National CASA Judge of the Year Award

Judge Cindy S. Lederman, Eleventh Judicial Circuit, was honored with the 2014 National CASA Judge of the Year Award. The National CASA Association—an acronym for Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children—is a network of 933 programs that recruit, train, and support volunteers to represent the best interests of abused and neglected children in the courtroom and other settings. Every year, this association honors the outstanding contributions of a judge who has furthered the best interest of children through his or her support of the Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Program.

Nominated by the Florida GAL Program, Judge Lederman, who has been on the bench since 1988, was a co-leader of the team that created the Dade County Domestic Violence Court, helped to conceive the Dependency Court Intervention Program for Family Violence, and co-created the Miami Safe Start Initiative. In addition, she has served on numerous committees that focus on bettering the lives of children and families, and she has written articles, done research, developed programs, and given talks on the needs of dependent children.

Jessica Allen, director of the Miami-Dade GAL Program said, “At the heart of every successful GAL Program are dedicated judges, and Judge Lederman has shown her dedication to children’s issues and the GAL Program throughout her career. And Michael Piraino, chief executive officer of the National CASA Association, called Judge Lederman “a leader in Florida and nationally on behalf of abused and neglected children.”

Original article by Beth C. Schwartz, Office of the State Courts Administrator (OSCA) published March 11, 2014 in the [Full Court Press](#).



Judge Cindy S. Lederman

## Extended Foster Care Workshop

An Extended Foster Care (EFC) Workshop was held in Tampa on January 24, 2014. Judges and magistrates from four judicial circuits attended the workshop, which covered the changes in the law regarding the extension of foster care. The extension of foster care is the result of the recently passed Nancy C. Detert Common Sense and Compassion Independent Living Act. Judge Katherine Essrig and the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit hosted the presentation, which was made by Deborah Schroth, Children Legal Services (CLS) Appellate Counsel for the Department of Children and Families (DCF); Avron Bernstein, Office of the State Courts Administrator (OSCA); and Circuit Judge Sue Robbins from the Fifth Judicial Circuit.

The presentation was designed to allow attendees to identify the changes in the law affecting youth transitioning to adulthood and to apply those changes to cases to facilitate permanency for young adults in extended foster care or who choose to leave care. Particular emphasis was placed on the law's changes to the court's jurisdiction; additional requirements for judicial review hearings and judicial review social study reports; and several statutes governing services and programs for young adults in extended foster care. The court's jurisdiction will now extend until age 21 with four exceptions: 1) if a young adult chooses to leave foster care upon reaching 18 years of age; 2) if a young adult does not meet eligibility requirements under section 39.6251 or chooses to leave care under that section; 3) an extension from age 18 to age 19 to determine whether appropriate services that were required to be provided to the young adult before reaching 18 have been provided; and 4) situations involving special immigrant juvenile status. Judicial review hearings fall into three general categories: judicial review for all children under 18 years of age; judicial review for children who are 17 years of age; and judicial review for young adults in foster care. Services and programs that may be available to young adults include: possible reentry into foster care; board rate, rent, and utilities; post-secondary education services and support (PESS); educational training vouchers; and aftercare support. DCF is in the process of promulgating administrative rules to implement the new law.

To view a recording of the EFC presentation, click on this link: <http://centervideo.forest.usf.edu/extendedfcjudicial/start.html>. The video has two parts. Part 1 has a running time of approximately one hour, and Part 2 is just under 48 minutes. Subsequent to the workshop, additional legislation has been introduced in the 2014 Legislative Session that would further assist youth transitioning to adulthood. Both House Bill 977 and Senate Bill 744 contain provisions for the court to remove the disability of nonage of a minor to allow a child in foster care to obtain motor vehicle insurance.

If you would like a copy of the PowerPoint presentation from the workshop or sample judicial review forms, contact Avron Bernstein at [bernsteina@flcourts.org](mailto:bernsteina@flcourts.org).

## New Baby Court Team in the 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit

The Seventh Judicial Circuit has begun work towards establishing a baby court team through a team of stakeholders with the intent on finding ways to improve outcomes for young children in the court system. The newest member of the model court team, Lisa Benitez, of the Volusia/Flagler Counties chapter for the Florida Association for Infant Mental Health, offered a presentation on the importance of providing essential services to young children. A child's first years of life are crucial for healthy social-emotional development. Infant mental health depends on the love and care a child receives in their social experiences.

According to state data, about 40 percent of the foster care population for the seventh circuit is under the age of five. When children are exposed to stress, essential neural networks will not develop, affecting their emotional centers and their ability to remember and transmit information, according to Ms. Benitez's presentation. Judge John M. Alexander, the seventh circuit's Administrative Family Law Judge, asked Family Court Services Manager Robert Sterner to organize a stakeholder meeting to further research infant mental health issues.

Stakeholders include DCF, the local Infant Mental Health chapter, community-based care providers, Children's Legal Services, the GAL program, Healthy Start, Stewart-Marchman Act Behavioral Services, One Voice for Volusia, and other private providers. The group is working together to determine what client population would be served, how the necessary information would be shared, how referrals would be made, who would provide the services needed, and how that information would be provided to the court in a timely manner. The circuit has forged ahead with the initiative without grant funding or additional funds from the state or local government. Its progress has come from the outstanding commitment of the community stakeholders, all with a shared vision of establishing essential services for young children involved in the court system.



Judge John M. Alexander



Robert Sterner, Family Court Manager

Two subcommittees were established and are working on key points in this effort. The Target Population Subcommittee is charged with identifying the specific target population for the baby court team while the Provider Development Subcommittee is researching the training needs for providers of infant mental health services. The subcommittees are meeting on an ongoing basis to carry out these tasks. Once the necessary protocols are agreed upon, Judge Alexander will disseminate the information to the dependency judges to consider as an option to assist the families and children within the target population.

For additional information, please contact Robert Sterner, Family Court Manager at [rsterner@circuit7.org](mailto:rsterner@circuit7.org).

## Miami-Dade's Regional Child Welfare Conference

Since 2006, the Miami-Dade Community-Based Care Alliance has developed and organized a national quality conference with an impressive faculty of researchers and clinicians who are at the top of their respective fields. This



Judge Rosa C. Figarola and Ms. Jennifer Scoff initiating the awards ceremony for outstanding case managers and supervisors.

signature event has been made possible through generous funding from The Children's Trust and Our Kids of Miami-Dade/Monroe and with the financial and in-kind support of The Miami Foundation, DCF, Miami-Dade County, The Advocate Program, and the Office of the State Courts Administrator. A celebratory luncheon and awards ceremony is held during the conference where outstanding casework, supervision, community collaboration, and vision are recognized.

Last year, the planning committee, which includes a broad-based coalition of agencies and organizations that have pledged their support to this conference initiative, decided to pilot a different conference format called Liberating

Structures, which has proved to be innovative, inclusive, and engaging. Liberating Structures offer an alternative way to approach and design how people work together. Keith McCandless and Henri Lipmanowicz, both from Liberating Structures, and Timothy Jaasko-Fisher, who is the Assistant Director for Court Improvement Training Academy at the University of Washington School of Law, were hired to facilitate the conference.

Liberating Structures has been used in many successful projects nationwide and internationally such as: Liberating the Courts and Child Welfare Law in Seattle; The Future for Nursing Campaign for Action, sponsored by AARP and The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; and the 2012 Colorado Restorative Justice Summit, among others. Liberating Structures designs come from theories and principles drawn from complexity science about self organization and the diffusion of innovation and change. They help group members tap into collective intelligence, be creatively adaptable, and build on each other's ideas to get results. They have a bias toward actions. The potential of Liberating Structures goes beyond any one initiative or the convening of a successful meeting or conference. The big payoff will come when the facility with processes that truly engage everyone is widely distributed and becomes the norm rather than the exception. For additional information regarding Liberating Structures, click on this link: [www.liberatingstructures.com](http://www.liberatingstructures.com).

The Eighth Annual Regional Child Welfare Conference, which took place in December 2013, brought together 300 child welfare professionals from all levels of management — case managers, protective investigators, attorneys, court staff, administrators, providers, volunteers, child advocates, clients, and mental health professionals, all of which have a stake in working to enhance the quality of life for children in Miami-Dade County. These professionals learned together and could immediately apply new methods to challenges during the sessions and post-conference. This particular conference was designed to engage every person who attended and empower them into action.

Liberating Structures methods were used to connect participants with each other; discover what participants have in common and what is different; find the themes and patterns that cut across all of their interest; extract all the big ideas that these themes and patterns inspire; determine the most attractive; dig deeper to find one with the greatest benefit to the community and which will attract the most support; clarify what participants must absolutely not do as a group to make it possible for their big idea to become a reality; identify who else must be included; and decide on the next steps.

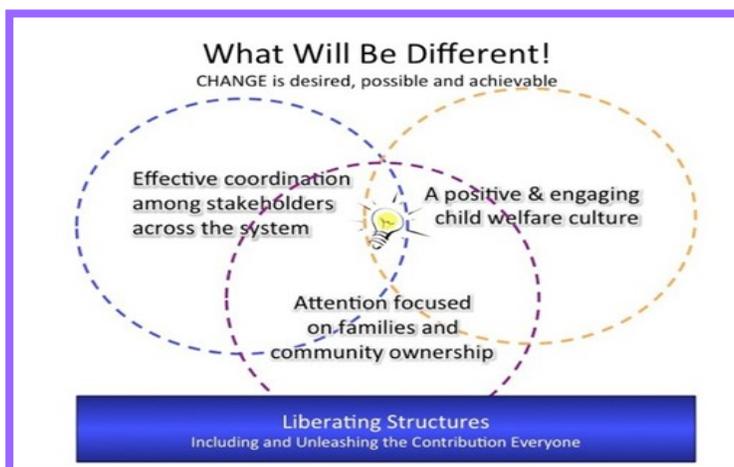
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## Regional Child Welfare Conference, continued

Learning a more effective way to collaborate is essential to promoting safety, permanency, and well-being for all children. This type of conference is needed to ignite a new engagement culture that can assist with overcoming barriers by working together. The goal is to have child welfare professionals across the system practicing to the full extent of their training and education and to have a diverse child welfare workforce that is able to grow and provide the kind of work that evolves over time.

According to Michelle Breuer, Executive Director, Miami-Dade CBC Alliance, “In order to produce systemic change, we cannot continue conducting business as usual with the usual suspects. If methods are made more transparent and more accessible, we can build the capacity of more people in organizations to change the quality of the conversation. The capacity to use better processes belongs to everyone!”

For additional information, please contact Michelle Breuer, Miami-Dade CBC Alliance Executive Director at [miamicbcalliance@gmail.com](mailto:miamicbcalliance@gmail.com).



## Florida Dependency Court Information System

The Florida Dependency Court Information System (FDCIS) is a web-based case management system that provides the judiciary with resources to ensure that court events are held timely and with access to all the necessary information on the children and families involved in the case. The goal of FDCIS is to assist courts in achieving positive outcomes for Florida’s abused and neglected children. FDCIS provides judges, magistrates, and court personnel with resources to ensure the accuracy and timeliness of court events. The system utilizes data exchanges with DCF and other agencies to reduce or eliminate data entry at the court level. FDCIS also allows users to run reports on various performance measures (e.g., child safety report, time to permanent placement report, etc.).

On March 17, 2014, the FDCIS data and training team conducted a system demonstration in Okaloosa County in the First Judicial Circuit. The system demonstration was well attended by judges, magistrates, court staff, and stakeholders. The FDCIS team discussed the capabilities of the system, upcoming data releases, and the system’s current data sharing agreements.

FDCIS continues to expand in terms of active users of the system and the amount of data available. The system presents data in an easy to read fashion, organizes workload, and provides individual case information as well as aggregate case-load, county, circuit, and statewide information. The purpose of the system is to be the centralized case management system used by the judiciary and court personnel. Currently, there are 113 registered users operating FDCIS in 13 circuits.

To request access to the Florida Dependency Court Information System or receive additional information, please submit a request via email to: [fdcis\\_support@flcourts.org](mailto:fdcis_support@flcourts.org) and/or contact your circuit’s model court liaison.



## NCJFCJ Conducts Site Visit in the 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial Circuit

Project ONE is an initiative of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) and stands for the principles of One family One judge, No wrong door, and Equal and coordinated access to justice. The project entails an analysis of court practices and resources, strategic planning to identify strengths and challenges in the current system, and technical assistance to implement needed reforms and promising practices in dependency and related juvenile and family cases. This project complements Florida's Model Courts Project by providing judges, court staff, and stakeholders with a guiding model, training and technical assistance, research and data analysis, and a national network of courts undertaking similar systemic improvements. There are six Project ONE pilot sites nationally, two of which are in Florida (East Pasco County and North Okaloosa County).



(L-R) Judge Terry R. Ketchel, Franz J. Braun, and Lorie Sicafuse

The NCJFCJ Site Manager, Franz J. Braun, and Research Associate Lorie Sicafuse conducted a Project ONE site visit in North Okaloosa County on February 26-28, 2014. The site visit provided the NCJFCJ staff an opportunity to meet the Project ONE Lead Judge Terrance "Terry" R. Ketchel and his team to learn more about the strengths and challenges of the court through stakeholder interviews, court observation, and case file review. The site visit also provided the opportunity for the Office of State Courts Administrator (OSCA) to send Leigh Merritt, a model court liaison who is also affiliated with the Dade City Project ONE court, an opportunity to participate. The highlight of the site visit was learning about the outreach of Judge Ketchel and his team to the faith-based community to recruit more foster homes in North Okaloosa.

Judge Ketchel provides the necessary judicial leadership that is key to the success of Project ONE. He believes that collaboration and open communication between all the stakeholders in the dependency process, including community leaders, is very important. When decisions are made about process changes, all the members of his court team are at the table. NCJFCJ staff will be returning to North Okaloosa County to conduct a trauma-audit of the court. To learn more about Project ONE and trauma-audits click on the following links: <http://www.ncjfcj.org/our-work/project-one> and <http://www.ncjfcj.org/update-ncjfcj-trauma-audits>.

### NCJFCJ Site Manager Hits the Ground Running...

Franz J. Braun, recently appointed Site Manager, came to NCJFCJ upon completion of his Judicial Administration Fellowship at the Judicial Council of California, Administrative Office of the Courts, Office of Governmental Affairs—where he performed the duties and functions of a governmental affairs analyst. Mr. Braun spent two years in the JusticeCorp, one year as a university recruitment coordinator and the other as a legal intern, where he completed over 300 hours of service assisting pro se litigants with their legal paperwork at the Pomona Self-Help Center.

In addition to serving as the NCJFCJ Site Manager, Mr. Braun is a Lieutenant Commander in the United States Navy Reserve and is currently the Officer-in-Charge of Operational Support Unit 1961 in Reno, NV and the Future Plans Department Head for Commander Pacific Fleet Joint Contingency Unit 502. He is a CASA volunteer and vice-chair of the Washoe County CASA Foundation. Mr. Braun was named 2013 CASA Volunteer of the Year.

For additional information regarding the Project ONE site visit, please contact Leigh Merritt at [merrittl@flcourts.org](mailto:merrittl@flcourts.org) or 850-414-8868.



Franz J. Braun, NCJFCJ Site Manager

# ABC Visitation Program in the 20<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit



ABC Visitation Training-January 2014

In the Twentieth Judicial Circuit, the judiciary, the University of Delaware, the Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI), GAL program, Children's Network of Southwest Florida, and Children's Legal Services have come together to embrace a new approach to visitation: the Attachment Bio-behavioral Catch up (ABC) Visitation Program. This is a byproduct of a circuit-wide workgroup to address children's trauma in placement transitions. The circuit began with an initial training for foster parents, child welfare professionals, and guardians ad litem on January 31, 2014. Dr. Caroline Roben of the University of Delaware led the training via an interactive webinar along with Carol Schaffer of QPI.

This evidence-based program utilizes early family engagement to reduce trauma to children, enhance parental awareness of healthy ways to engage their child, and encourage parents towards a successful reunification. When infants and young children experience caregiving failures through adverse conditions such as neglect, maltreatment, and exposure to violence, they are at risk for many problems, including challenges with self-regulation and disorganized attachment. The goal of ABC is to enhance parents' capacities for interacting with their children in nurturing, synchronous, and non-frightening ways. The program has been implemented in sites throughout the country and has demonstrated effectiveness in improving young children's attachment status as well as physiological and emotional functioning.

## WHY DO WE NEED THIS PROGRAM?

After foster care placement, birth parents are often limited to supervised visitation at an office or visitation center. Foster parents, now the child's primary caregiver, are only sporadically present at these visits. Such visits can go poorly. Children and parents are upset, there is little structure or preparation for the parents' visit, and children may feel anxiety in the absence of their caregiver, causing feelings of rejection by the birth parent. As a result of these adverse experiences, parents often miss visits in the beginning of a placement period causing further distance between parent and child, distrust between foster and birth parent, and delays in reunification. Children's Network of Southwest Florida is piloting an adaptation of ABC to be used as a method for improving visits between children, foster parents, and birth parents.

## WHAT MAKES THIS WORK?

The program provides the birth parents support from a visitation mentor and their child's foster parent to understand what the child might be feeling and how to respond to the child. Parents quickly learn how to connect with their children and make the most out of the visitation process. In addition, Cape Christian Church will help provide a naturalistic visitation environment that is attractive and comfortable for the parent and child. The church has also agreed to assist with locating other churches within prominent geographical areas that may be willing to assist with providing biological and foster parents convenient locations to meet.



Visitation in Progress.

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# ABC Visitation Program, continued

## GETTING STARTED:

Initially the program will focus on the most vulnerable population, young children (ages 6 months to 5 years) who have recently been placed in foster care. The immediate goals will be to:

1. Strengthen the relationship between the foster parent and birth parent.
2. Help the birth parent to have a successful visit, feel less rejected by the child, and be more encouraged to continue visitation.
3. Increase foster and birth parent use of synchrony (also known as “following the lead”) and delightful engagement with the child.

Foster parents are a critical component to the ABC program because of the role they play in providing quality care for the children in their custody and their ongoing efforts to support reunification. The foster family must work in partnership with the birth parent in the best interest of the child and demonstrate commitment to supporting the relationship between the child and the birth parents. A strong relationship between the foster family and the birth family provides a non-threatening and supportive relationship, which can continue long past the child’s return home and case closure.

## WHERE WE ARE GOING?

After establishing the initial success of the program with the current pilot group, the Children’s Network of Southwest Florida will train all foster families in the twentieth circuit in this evidence-based intervention to support reunification and to reduce the trauma children experience while placed in out-of-home care. The ultimate goal is to revolutionize the visitation process and offer families the maximum opportunity to be successful in their efforts to make their family whole again.

For additional information, please contact Alicia Guerra, Chief Legal Counsel, at [alicia.guerra@gal.fl.gov](mailto:alicia.guerra@gal.fl.gov).



Foster parents participating at the ABC Visitation Program.

## GAL Executive Director Reappointed

On Friday, December 27, 2013, Governor Rick Scott announced the reappointment of Statewide Guardian ad Litem Program Executive Director Alan Abramowitz. First appointed by Governor Charlie Crist in December 2010, Mr. Abramowitz will now serve a new three year term from December 2013 to December 2016.

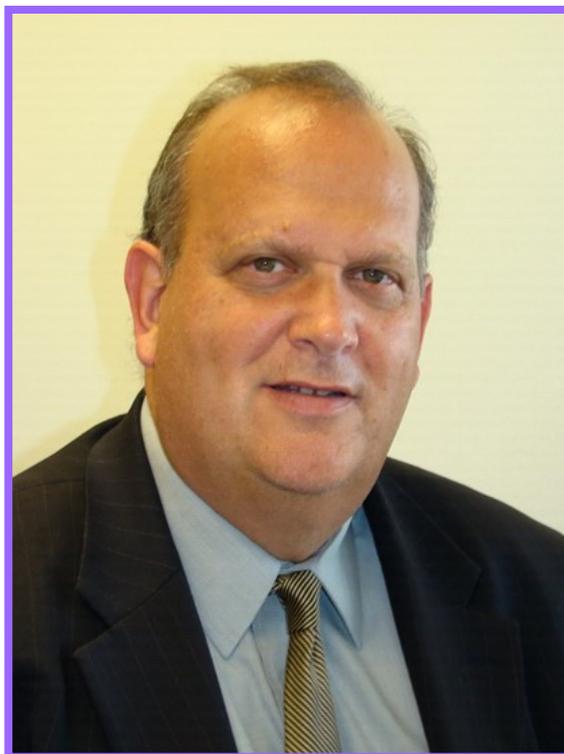
Upon being reappointed, Mr. Abramowitz stated that he appreciates the governor's and legislators' support for the volunteers and staff that support the program so each child has a voice. "The volunteers and staff make being their Director so rewarding since I often hear about how they make a difference in the lives of children. The Guardian ad Litem (GAL) is so much more to a child than just their court advocate. A GAL volunteer often becomes a role model, mentor, educational surrogate, friend, confidant, and most important, a consistent caring person on whom the child can rely."

"As Director, my goal was to really give a high level of empowerment and lay the foundation for guardians and staff to make an even greater difference in the lives of children. I appreciate the judges' role they have played in retaining volunteers," Mr. Abramowitz shared. "They often ensure the volunteers are heard and recognized, and validate that their time is important to ensure they get recommendations from an independent source. As we approach 2015, the program's 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary, with the goal of more than 10,000 volunteers, I am looking forward to supporting our dedicated volunteers and staff who are there for the children and young adults, not solely because it is their job, but because it's their passion in life."

Many of Mr. Abramowitz's accomplishments were originally published by David July in a blog posted in January 2014. Mr. July briefly recognized Mr. Abramowitz for his many accomplishments, which include the Quality-Parenting for Children in Foster Care (Senate Bill 164); updated Standards of Operation; the passage of Senate Bill 1960, permitting GAL volunteers to transport children; and additional funding for the program. Mr. Abramowitz is also a member of the Steering Committee on Families and Children in the Court, chaired by Justice Barbara Pariente.

Judge Cindy S. Lederman, from Miami-Dade said, "Alan Abramowitz has experience in almost every area of the child welfare system, and he has excelled in every position he has held. He truly understands the responsibilities and challenges of those who work in the system, and he has been involved in policy and practice reform. He has always been motivated by what is best for the child. This year he is using his many talents and his extensive knowledge to perform a Florida miracle: full funding for the GAL program." Judge Lederman added, "Nothing could be more important to our children, yet we have been unable to achieve this before. Alan Abramowitz is a true leader." Congratulations to Alan Abramowitz on his reappointment. As he recently said, "Together we are making a difference for Florida's children."

For more information, please contact Leigh Merritt, Senior Court Analyst II, at [merritl@flcourts.org](mailto:merritl@flcourts.org) or 850-414-8868.



Alan Abramowitz, Executive Director  
Statewide Guardian ad Litem Program

## Legal Lessons in the 4<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit

The Fourth Judicial Circuit has created a distinct training concept titled “Legal Lessons.” Legal Lessons entail collaborative efforts to organize and present ongoing dependency training opportunities on various topics of interest to lawyers, case workers, GAL volunteers, DJJ staff, DCF staff, therapists, and the rest of the child welfare and juvenile community. The first Legal Lesson was held on January 22, 2014, and continues each month with a summer break in June, July, and August and a winter break in November and December. This educational training has been very popular and attendance usually exceeds seventy.

Legal Lessons could not occur without the support and collaboration of the fourth circuit’s stakeholders. Family Support Services, Children Legal Services, GAL, DCF, DJJ, and case management organizations all participate in planning and presentations, with special assistance and support from Stacey West, in house legal counsel at Family Support Services of North Florida. Legal Lessons has been very helpful to the fourth circuit’s model court objective of implementing evidence-based practices.

The upcoming 2014 Legal Lessons are listed below:

- April 23, 2014 — The Values of Permanency Roundtables
- May 28, 2014 — Evidence-Based Training
- September 24, 2014 — Legislative Updates 2014
- October 22, 2014 — TBD

For additional information, please contact Bridgit Moore, Family Support Services of North Florida, at [bridgit.moore@fssnf.org](mailto:bridgit.moore@fssnf.org) or 904-432-2733.

## April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month

This year marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA - January 31, 1974). The [CAPTA](#) was created to provide assistance to states to develop child abuse and neglect identification and prevention programs. National Child Abuse Prevention Month is a time to acknowledge the importance of families and communities working together to prevent child abuse and neglect, and to promote the social and emotional well-being of children and families. In honor of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Child Welfare Information Gateway is featuring a historical timeline of significant moments in child abuse prevention on its website, in addition to several resources to help raise awareness, prevent child maltreatment, and promoting well-being. The Child Welfare Information Gateway is a part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Administration for Children and Families.

Currently, the site is featuring:

- 19<sup>th</sup> National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect,
- 2014 Protective Factors Approaches in Child Welfare,
- Tip sheets addressing particular parenting concerns or questions to distribute to parents and caregivers, and
- Parent Education to Strengthen Families and Reduce the Risk of Maltreatment

For additional information, please visit The Child Welfare Information Gateway website at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/preventionmonth/prevention-publications/#2014>.

# Events on the Horizon

## APRIL

April 28-29, 2014—New Orleans, LA  
2014 Court Improvement Program Meeting

April 30-May 2, 2014—New Orleans, LA  
19th National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect

## MAY

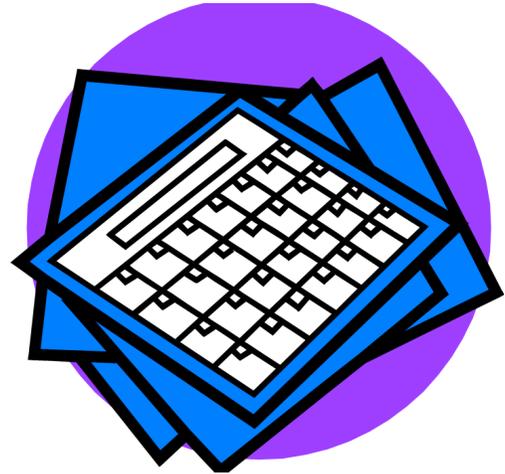
May 2, 2014—Tallahassee, FL  
Legislative Session Adjourns

May 12, 2014—Pensacola, FL  
Baby Court Teams Workshop

May 13-15, 2014—Orlando, FL  
2014 Adolescent Conference ([www.fjja.org](http://www.fjja.org))

May 22-23, 2014—Orlando, FL  
Task Force on Substance Abuse & Mental Health in the Courts Meeting

May 22-23, 2014—Orlando, FL  
Florida Guardian ad Litem Program  
2014 [Disabilities Training Conference](#)



## JUNE

June 9-13, 2014—Orlando, FL  
Florida College of Advanced Judicial Studies (AJS)

**\*On June 11<sup>th</sup> from 8:30am - 4:30pm, an in depth Safety Methodology course will be offered.**

June 16-17, 2014—West Palm Beach, FL  
Steering Committee on Families & Children in the Courts Meeting

## Model Court Liaisons

The Office of Court Improvement designates a model court liaison to each model court circuit. The model court liaisons work closely with individual model court judges and magistrates to develop, prioritize, and achieve court improvement goals. The following is a list of the model court liaisons and the circuits to which they are assigned.

Avron Bernstein	Circuit: 11	850-414-8661	<a href="mailto:bernsteina@flcourts.org">bernsteina@flcourts.org</a>
John Couch	Circuit: 13	850-410-1527	<a href="mailto:couchj@flcourts.org">couchj@flcourts.org</a>
Dana Dowling	Circuit: 7	850-414-8389	<a href="mailto:dowlingd@flcourts.org">dowlingd@flcourts.org</a>
Jovasha Lang	Circuits: 1, 16, 17, and 20	850-617-4003	<a href="mailto:langj@flcourts.org">langj@flcourts.org</a>
Leigh Merritt	Circuits: 5, 6, 10, 12, and 14	850-414-8868	<a href="mailto:merrittl@flcourts.org">merrittl@flcourts.org</a>
Nathan Moon	Circuit: 15	850-487-0843	<a href="mailto:moonn@flcourts.org">moonn@flcourts.org</a>
Dacia Roberts	Circuits: 3 and 8	850-922-9337	<a href="mailto:robertsd@flcourts.org">robertsd@flcourts.org</a>
Kathleen Tailer	Circuits: 2, 4, and 19	850-617-4007	<a href="mailto:tailerk@flcourts.org">tailerk@flcourts.org</a>
Tamarrah Tarver-Small	Circuits: 9 and 18	850-921-6095	<a href="mailto:tarvert@flcourts.org">tarvert@flcourts.org</a>

*Florida's Dependency Court Improvement Team*

## Request for Articles

Do you have an idea for an article, a best practice to share, or an event to promote? If so, please consider submitting it for a future issue of this newsletter. Your contributions will make *The Dependency Outlook* a more effective and useful tool for judges, magistrates, and court staff throughout Florida. For more information and/or to submit an article, please contact Dacia Roberts at [robertsd@flcourts.org](mailto:robertsd@flcourts.org).

### Requests for Submissions

- Submit articles by the first of March, June, September, and December to be considered for the next newsletter.
- Articles should be related to dependency.
- Photos may be included with submissions.
- Submit articles and photos via email as Microsoft Word attachments.