

Wisconsin Supreme Court: Conference on Child Welfare and the Courts seeks innovative solutions to complex problems facing today's children and families

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CONTACT: Bridget Bauman
Children's Court Improvement Program
(608) 267-1958

Madison, Wis. (Oct. 16, 2017) - More than 350 court, child welfare, school, tribal representatives, and legal professionals from across Wisconsin will join forces Oct. 18-20 in Elkhart Lake to find better ways to serve youth and their families involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

The 2017 Conference on Child Welfare and the Courts: Inspiring Hope and Building Resiliency Among Our Youth is a call to action for innovative solutions to vexing problems, such as multi-generational family trauma, sex trafficking in the digital age, the opioid crisis, and a sense of hopelessness.

The conference, co-hosted by the Children's Court Improvement Program (CCIP) of the Director of State Courts Office and the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, includes participants from 55 counties, seven tribes, the court system, Legislature, and multiple state agencies.

"Never before have we taken a more comprehensive approach to addressing these difficult issues and toward helping the people who need it most," said Wisconsin

Supreme Court Chief Justice Patience Drake Roggensack. “This solution-oriented conference should lead us to better outcomes for children and families,” said Roggensack, who chairs the Wisconsin Commission on Children, Families and the Courts.

Members of the multi-disciplinary commission help implement the CCIP, a federal grant initiative focused on improving the processing of child abuse and neglect cases in the court system. Co-chairs of the conference include commission member Judge Marshall B. Murray, Milwaukee County Circuit Court, and Jason Witt, La Crosse County Human Services Director.

This year’s conference builds upon the groundwork established by the 2015 Conference on Child Welfare and the Courts: Moving Toward a Trauma-Informed Wisconsin by focusing on solutions-based approaches for improving the social and emotional well-being of children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, said CCIP Director Bridget Bauman.

Presenters at this year’s conference include judges, attorneys, and child welfare professionals who have implemented inventive approaches in their jurisdictions to engage youth and those around them to provide early intervention and diversion.

The conference, which is filled to capacity, features educational sessions, speakers, workshops and discussions on dozens of topics, such as racial disparity, suicide prevention, educational stability, and partnerships aimed at improving how the system responds to youth in need.