

<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> October 27, 2016
	<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) 2017-2021.
- REFERENCES:** Section 438 of the Social Security Act; Section 7401 of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (Public Law (P.L.) 109-171); Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act (the Act); Section 104 of the Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act (P.L. 112-34).
- 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 for FYs 2017 through 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.
- 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.

All three grants were last reauthorized through 2016 via The Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act (P.L. 112-34). The Act added provisions encouraging state courts to promote concurrent planning and improve engagement of the entire family in court processes relating to child welfare, family preservation, family reunification and adoption. It also allocated one million dollars to establish a Tribal Court Improvement Program. Awards for the Tribal CIP are made on a competitive basis every three years.

As of this date, the Congress has not reauthorized the program. The basic grant is funded under a continuing resolution that funds the government through December 9, 2016. We do not yet know whether funding will be available for the data and training grants. **Accordingly, CB is inviting states to apply for all three grants by November 22, 2016. As detailed later in this instruction, strategic planning will only be required for the basic grant at this time. Should funding become available for the data and training grants in the future, CB will offer the opportunity for state courts to amend strategic plans to incorporate additional projects and activities made possible with such funding.**

**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 for FYs 2017-2021, 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 for FYs 2017-2021.
- **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: (1) promote the continuous quality improvement of court proceedings in child welfare proceedings and (2) enhance and expand 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 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; Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs; the mental health/behavioral health treatment provider community; the substance abuse treatment provider community; domestic violence programs including domestic violence coalition executive directors<sup>1</sup> and family violence prevention and services state administrators<sup>2</sup>; state departments of education, substance abuse, and

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<sup>1</sup> (<http://www.vawnet.org/links/state-coalitions.php>)

<sup>2</sup> (<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/resource/fypsa-state-admin>). To address the needs of adults and children experiencing domestic violence, CIPs can partner with organizations such as state domestic violence coalitions, local domestic violence and sexual assault service programs, shelter programs, transitional and long-term housing assistance providers, and batterers' intervention programs. These providers may offer direct services to families 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.

State courts are strongly encouraged to convene the task force at least quarterly. Task force meetings should include joint review and discussion of child welfare outcome data on court-involved youth and families, data that may be available from court data systems (including toolkit measures<sup>3</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>4</sup>

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children or important in-service trainings that could be developed specifically to address how domestic violence impacts families in child welfare proceedings. Coalitions partner with government, private industry, non-profit and faith-based communities, and other stakeholders to effectively coordinate and improve the safety-net of services available to victims and their dependents.

<sup>3</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>4</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-

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.

One example of collaboration could include the formation of a work group consisting of representatives from the state court, title IV-B/IV-E agency and State and local departments of education. This work group would meet regularly to examine data concerning educational stability and success and educational outcomes for youth in care. This group could also work to implement the foster care and education provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) and Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, especially to support data sharing, and ensure school stability and success.<sup>5</sup>

The CIP can also play an important role in helping courts to implement the older youth provisions of the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act. In particular, interagency workgroups could work to support normalcy, re-evaluate the use of Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement as a permanency option, and ensure youth engagement in court hearings, case planning, and transition planning.

An example of collaboration with tribes is 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 new Bureau of Indian Affairs ICWA Regulations<sup>6</sup>, and develop and implement plans to continuously improve ICWA practice.

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

Minimally, state courts applying for CIPS grants must plan for and implement two projects: a project to continuously improve the quality of dependency court proceedings, and a joint project with the title IV-E/IV-B agency and, where applicable tribes, using available data that will focus

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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.

<sup>5</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>6</sup> The final regulations can be found at <http://www.indianaffairs.gov/WhoWeAre/BIA/OIS/HumanServices/IndianChildWelfareAct/index.htm>.

on improving a specific safety, permanency, or well-being outcome or outcomes.

- (1) A project to continuously improve the quality of dependency court proceedings, including hearings and reviews. State courts must develop and implement a plan to continuously improve the quality of dependency court proceedings, including hearings and reviews. The plan must identify the measures and approaches that will be used. CIPs may use any of the toolkit measures or other measures that the state court finds meaningful. If a CIP already has an effective plan in place that plan must be articulated in the application. 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 3 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 Round 3 Data Indicators, National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, and National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)<sup>7</sup>;
- Systematic or sampling methods to collect data on a county, pilot or multiple county basis; and
- 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.

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<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/research-data-technology/reporting-systems/nytd>

- (2) A joint project with the title IV-E/IV-B agency using available data that will focus on improving 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.

For example, a state (CIP and agency together) upon review of data, may determine that re-entry into foster care is impacting permanency. The agency and court may identify the percentage of cases that reenter foster care within 12 months and use both statewide and county level data to identify counties with higher or lower rates of re-entry. This data can be used to dig deeper into the practices within those counties to try and understand why and how rates may be climbing or in decline.

Another innovative example is the “Cold Case Project” which originated in Georgia. The project is a joint effort between the CIP and child welfare agency designed to identify and promote permanency for children least likely to achieve it. The project uses a predictive model with AFCARS data to identify and rank children based on their likelihood to achieve permanency. A team of attorneys and child welfare staff review children’s records (including case files, legal files, adoption files, medical records, and educational records) to identify barriers to permanency. The team then works to address those barriers and finalize legal permanency. In some jurisdictions, this team is a case planning team. In others, it’s a specialized docket convened by the juvenile/family court judge.

Where data identify the need, joint projects to address common co-occurring factors in child welfare cases including mental health disorder, substance abuse disorder and domestic violence, are strongly encouraged.

The CB recognizes that the scope and scale of CIP projects and activities will vary according to grant award amounts and other available resources.

### c. Continuous Quality Improvement and Change Management

The previous program instruction for the CIP<sup>8</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>9</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

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<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/pi1202>

<sup>9</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 2017, State courts must complete and submit an application including all of the requirements detailed below on November 22, 2016. 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 **November 22, 2016**.

1. A letter from the highest state court requesting funding for each of the CIP grants desired for FYs 2017-2021, 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.
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; and,
  - d. the agency will pursue cross-training opportunities with the state court/CIP.
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 e 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>10</sup>

- Certification Regarding Drug-Free Work Place;
- Debarment Certification; and
- 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 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. Beginning in 2017, annual self-assessment and strategic plan updates will be due June 30<sup>th</sup> and should cover all activities from October 1<sup>st</sup>, identify work to be

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<sup>10</sup> It is not necessary to include these certifications with the application.

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>11</sup> The CBCC is composed of three organizations<sup>12</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

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<sup>11</sup> See <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/courts/about-courts/>

<sup>12</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.

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/>

### **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 9/30/2019. The public reporting burden for the CIP grants covered under this Program Instruction is estimated to average 88 hours per response for FY 2017 for states applying for all three CIP grants. In non-application years (2018-2021) the estimated average hours per response is 48 hours total for all three grants.

**INQUIRIES TO:    CB Regional Offices**

/s/

Rafael López  
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 2017 Tentative Allocations for the Basic Court Improvement Program Grant](#)

[F: CB Regional Office Program Manager Directory](#)