

Standing Communication Plan between the Kentucky Courts and the Department for Community Based Services

The Kentucky Court of Justice (KCOJ) and the Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) work together in a variety of ways and through numerous initiatives at the local, regional, and statewide level to ensure safety, permanency and well-being for Kentucky's children and families. Communication is an ongoing activity for any organization that serves, depends upon, or is in any way connected with other agencies and local communities. It is vital that the child welfare and judicial systems strive to meaningfully, consistently, and effectively communicate at every opportunity. The purpose, audience, message, and channels may change, but the need to maintain relationships and collaborations remain for the betterment of the court and child welfare system in Kentucky, as well as the families and children we serve.

Communication Framework

The KCOJ and DCBS have established the following framework of communication between the courts and DCBS staff to ensure consistency and clarity regardless of the topic at hand:

- **A local DCBS point of contact should communicate with the local court point of contact about any barriers or concerns related to a specific case or trends in cases.** Problem-solving barriers provides the opportunity to clarify misunderstandings and build local relationships. If a local point of contact has not yet been identified, it should be done so as soon as possible. If you are unsure who your local contact may be, you may reach out to the state contacts identified below.
- **Meetings should be scheduled regularly by the DCBS point of contact with the court, Office of Legal Services (OLS) and other community partners.** These meetings may be utilized to review data, clarify process barriers and concerns, share agency information and make improvements that positively impact outcomes for children in out-of-home care. It should be noted that specific cases should not be discussed as the intent of these collaborative meetings is to identify trends and systemic issues.
- **Common trends in barriers identified by DCBS that are not able to be resolved at the local level should be shared with appropriate DCBS leadership.** Barriers or concerns related to a specific case that cannot be resolved at the local level should also be shared. DCBS leadership may resolve the issue internally or may consult with identified points of contact with the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). Likewise, the courts may share barriers or concerns with AOC. AOC may provide direct support or facilitate solution-focused discussions with DCBS.

Questions regarding this communication plan can be directed to DCBS's Division of Protection and Permanency Director Mary Carpenter (Mary.Carpenter@ky.gov) or the AOC's Family Law Liaison Nathan Goins (NathanielGoins@kycourts.net).