

**LINN COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT  
FAMILY LAW ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
October 7, 2009  
MINUTES**

**Present:** Judge Bispham, Steve Bingenheimer, Jason Carlile, Mayrean Carter, Troy Fuller, Torri Lynn, Ryan Mattingly, Sue McGuire, Dar Merrill, Frank Moore, Judge Daniel Murphy, Mitzi Naucner, Jodie Peterson, Drew Reynolds, Renee Smith, Toni Klohk, Heidi Strickland.

**Introductions**

Introductions were made.

**Budget Update**

Judge Bispham explained there have been an increased number of fee waivers which reduced both our State and local budget. The reduced local income really impacts our mediation fund. Because of our budget cuts, required furloughs have been announced as well as staff reductions. Linn County has an approximate 7-1 staff to judge ratio while the state's average is 8.5-1. Accordingly, furlough and staff reductions hit our court harder than most.

We expect more news regarding the budget in December or the first part of January. We are hopeful we will not experience any additional cuts, but we are preparing for the worst. Court fees have increased for violations and civil fees. Hopefully, this will help reduce the need for any future layoffs.

**Program Review**

*Family Court Specialist/ ProSe Filings- (Judge Bispham)*

The number of cases filed by ProSe litigants (a party who is not represented by an attorney) has increased. At this time last year, there were 635 total new or modified Domestic cases filed. This year, as of August 2009, there were a total of 679 filed. Sixty-nine percent of these were initiated by a ProSe litigant.

*Mediation/Arbitration Program/Budget- (Judge Murphy)*

Judge Murphy said the court may no longer require arbitration in all cases. This has decreased the amount of cases involved in arbitration therefore, increasing the cases which need to be heard in court. Also, with the declining Mediation budget, we will soon have to restrict the amount of time people spend in mediation. This may result in fewer agreements, thus will also require more cases be heard in court.

*Family Treatment Court and Juvenile Drug Court- (Judge Murphy)*

The Family Treatment Court has been in progress for over a year. There has been 60 people come through the program with 8 graduates. There hasn't been enough time to measure success, but Department of Human Services (DHS) is happy with the program.

*Juvenile Drug Court- (Judge Murphy)*

There are 6-7 youths in the program now. We have had 50 go through the program since its inception. Fifteen youths have graduated from the program. The team feels the program is a success. Society tends to accept the youth's drug and alcohol using behavior making it very difficult for the youths to stay on track.

*eCourt- (Judge Murphy)*

eCourt is progressing. This project is funded by debt (bonds) and seems to be progressing at a snail's pace. Legislators are gun shy with large Information Technology projects. The fiscal office has slowed down the project to early 2010 and then now to early 2011. This is a deal of a year or more. If the decision is not to borrow more money, it could halt the project. So far, Linn is expected to accepting filings in the Spring/Summer 2011.

On our own, we have been experimenting with DHS and eFilings. Beginning 9/1/09 we began receiving electronic filings from DHS. The filings have cut down on the amount of paper stored in the files and has sped up the data entry process.

*Domestic Violence Court- (Judge Bispham & Jason Carlile)*

Domestic Violence Court (DV court) speeds up the case process as well as orders timely treatment to those who need it. An application for a Rural Grant has been granted to provide funds for DV court. Another grant called an Enforcement Grant was added to provide a probation officer. Ric Bergey, Linn County Parole & Probation, is in the process of hiring a new probation officer for the program. Having a probation officer in the program will bring DV court to the next level by providing increased supervision.

**Linn County Website**

*Web Address Change/Updated Forms – (Heidi Strickland)*

Oregon Judicial Department's websites are now being serviced by a different server; therefore, Linn County Court's web address has changed to [www.courts.oregon.gov/linn](http://www.courts.oregon.gov/linn). This site has many useful forms and information.

**Family Relief Nursery**

*Childcare for Treatment Court participants – (Renee Smith)*

The "Relief Nursery Downtown" in Eugene is a satellite location offering respite, childcare, parenting support, intakes and referrals for families at the Lane County Courthouse and the Public Service Building. The focus is on supporting survivors of domestic violence. Grant funding may be available for a similar childcare program in Linn County. The Family Relief Nursery would need additional funds to support staff for child care associated with the DV program. There are churches around the courthouse parameter who might be interested in allowing us to use their facility. Often you just need to create it, fund it and then you can implement it. Renee will get more information from the Eugene site in regards to rules, regulations and funding.

**Family Law Advisory Plan**

We need to identify what it is we want to address as a committee, identify our goals, prioritize those goals and then develop a plan to work towards our goals.

Judge Murphy motioned to have the LCFLAC make a recommendation to keep the Family Court Specialist position. This position saves time for the judges. With more cases being set on the docket, the judges' time has become increasingly valuable. ProSe numbers have increased which increases the amount of time needed to help the people without attorneys. Judge Bispham then moved to second the motion. The committee voted to approve the motion.

Before accepting the Relief Nursery's childcare program as a LCFLAC special project, Renee will check with community service organizations for information on fund raising and childcare centers.

### **Other**

Ryan Mattingly, with the Albany School District, wanted to know how they could help with communication between the courts and the schools, in regards to youth drug abuse. Judge Murphy said there would be jurisdiction issues for the court if the youth has not been charged with a crime. Judge Murphy suggested we should discuss further how to improve communications between the school district and the courts.

### **Future Meeting**

Updates will be sent via email to the committee in between meetings. An email will also be sent with available dates for our next meeting. We will schedule the next meeting after the election so that we have the budget information to share with the committee.

### **Meeting Adjourned**