

# MODEL COURT TEAM

## RESET PROJECT



### Using this Template

This reset project is designed to help teams improve collaboration, effectiveness, and efficiency in their work to improve the local dependency system. JCIP is available to help facilitate any part of this process.

### Create a Mission Statement

A mission statement keeps your team on track, especially when there are so many issues to address in juvenile practice.

**TIP:** Consider putting the statement on all future team meeting agendas.

**Purpose:** Clearly state why the team exists and what outcomes it seeks. Keep it concise and motivating.

#### Example (adapt to your county):

- The [County] Model Court Team exists to collaborate to improve families' experience in court, case outcomes, and timely permanency.

**TIP:** Use AI to fast-track creation of the mission statement. Have each member write down why they are a part of the team and what they hope the team will accomplish. This can be words or phrases; it doesn't need to be perfect. Put the responses into Microsoft Co-Pilot and ask for 2-3 brief mission statements based on the input. Have the team review and select one.

### Core Members

The core team should be comprised of a small group of individuals (with decision-making authority when applicable) committed to moving the work of the team forward. Recommended members include the lead judge, a court staff lead or supervisor, a manager from DOJ, the ODHS-Child Welfare Program or District Manager, a Family Defense Attorney Representative, the CASA Program Manager, and the CRB Field Manager. Other members, based upon local issues and projects, would include tribal representatives, a parent mentor, or treatment providers.

### Advisory Members

Advisory team members are used to gather more comprehensive feedback on local needs and team goals, as well as the impact of team efforts to improve. Members could include additional judges and attorneys, additional roles from ODHS, community treatment providers, school representatives, and assistant district attorneys.

### Team Role Guidance

- **Team Lead** (Judge or designee): Sets agenda priorities, ensures balanced participation, and upholds team agreements
- **Facilitator** (Judge or member volunteer): Keeps meetings on time and outcomes focused; supports consensus building
- **Team Admin** (court staff or designee): Circulates agendas, captures decisions/actions, maintains email lists
- **Members:** represents agency/role perspectives, shares data responsibly, carries out agreed actions between meetings

### Member Expectations

Below are recommended expectations; adapt to your county.

- Prioritize meetings; if unavailable, send a substitute and ensure follow-

	<p>up.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather feedback from agency/group/role to ensure representation at meetings. Share information from the model court team out to agency/group/role.</li> <li>• Raise issues central to the team’s purpose in other meetings.</li> <li>• Come to meetings open to new ideas.</li> <li>• For members that work directly with families (e.g., family defense attorneys), bring that voice to the team when appropriate.</li> <li>• Bring data to the team to consider (e.g., ODHS, OJD, CRB, and more).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Team Principles/Agreements</b></p>	<p>Below are recommended principles/agreements; adapt to your county.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep improvement focus as a standing agenda item.</li> <li>• Establish improvement goals that are clear, actionable, and achievable.</li> <li>• Allocate 5 to 10 minutes at the end of every meeting for next steps.</li> <li>• “There are no dumb ideas”—we treat all contributions with respect and kindness.</li> <li>• Assume positive intent.</li> <li>• Decisions on priorities will be made after member feedback and through consensus whenever possible.</li> <li>• Start on time, end on time; set times for agenda items; use parking lot for out-of-scope topics.</li> <li>• Decisions and action items from meetings are recorded and shared.</li> <li>• Other: _____</li> </ul>
<p><b>Meeting Structure</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>Core Team</b> will meet monthly/quarterly on: (e.g. the first _____ day of every month from noon to 1pm in-person and with a virtual option. The agenda will be shared in advance.</li> <li>• <b>The MCT Lead is Judge _____</b>, who will lead meetings and finalize agenda topics.</li> <li>• _____ is the <b>Team Admin</b>, who will gather agenda items, circulate agendas, and keep notes.</li> <li>• _____ is the <b>Facilitator</b>, who will help plan meetings that are interactive and keep them on track.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Decision-Making</b></p>	<p>JCIP recommends discussing and adapting the below as needed so that it is clear to all members how decisions are made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our model court team is a space to identify shared values and ways to improve the court process and experience of families in dependency cases. We will not/cannot require team members, or the agencies they represent, to commit to decisions that they are not willing or able to accomplish. Members will meaningfully consider what they/their role/their agency can contribute to identified priorities and/or projects.</li> <li>• Selecting priorities and/or projects will be done as a team after all members are given opportunity to provide feedback, which may include voting. The judge lead may determine the order in which priorities are addressed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>In Advance of Meetings</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A calendar invite will be sent for meetings.</li> <li>• An agenda will be sent out in advance of meetings.</li> <li>• Members will email the team admin with agenda items.</li> <li>• Notes will be taken at meetings and distributed to members.</li> </ul>

## Identifying Areas for Improvement

### Step-by-step approach:

1. **Collect and discuss available data** (e.g., shelter hearing improvement projects, time to jurisdiction, availability and access to services and treatments, parental/ family/ child engagement).

***TIP:** Reach out to JCIP for OJD data and/or to come and present on the data at your meeting.*

2. **Discuss problem areas for the team to improve.** What challenges is the team best positioned to address? Prioritize those that the court and system partners each have a role in addressing.

***TIP:** Use “[25/10 Crowd Sourcing](#)”. Each member writes 2 areas they would like the team to prioritize on an index card. Cards are passed among members until well-mixed. Members score the priorities on the card they are holding from 1-5 (low to high), scoring each topic independently. Repeated until each card has been scored 5 times. The final scorer should add up the scores for each priority (they should score between 5 lowest and 25 highest). The top ten ideas are then shared with the group by asking “does anyone have a priority that scored 25?” and continuing down until you have the 10 highest scored ideas. This approach ensures everyone contributes and allows people to put forth ideas anonymously.*

3. **Rank the top 10 priorities identified** from 1-3 (low to high) by **impact and feasibility**. In other words, “How much would addressing this problem improve our system?” and “How hard would it be to improve this problem?” Discuss as a team and narrow to the team’s 3 top priority areas.

### Priority list template:

1. Priority Area #1: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Priority Area #2: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Priority Area #3: \_\_\_\_\_

(Some examples of team priorities includes: faster initiation of services for parents & children; engaging parents early in the court process; improved availability and timely access to services; timely judgments following hearings; timeliness to jurisdiction; timeliness to permanency; increased supports for parents through services like case managers, navigators, parent mentors; dedicated dependency or specialty dependency dockets; improved hearing processes and procedures).

## Developing an Improvement Project

**Dig deeper into the problem and create a plan to improve. This approach ensures projects are effective and stay on track.**

***TIP:** JCIP has developed several projects that teams can use/ adapt to their local needs. It is still worth identifying needs as outlined above, however, as this will help to better understand the collective goals and priorities of the team members.*

### Step-by-step approach:

1. Have the team discuss and **decide which priority area the team will work** on first.
2. Conduct a **root cause analysis** ([worksheet available on SharePoint](#)). This means, ask “What is causing the problem we identified?” and then for each cause, “Why is that happening?” until you get to the heart of the problem(s). Doing a root cause analysis allows the team to find solutions that appropriately address the root/ underlying causes, ensuring a greater and more sustainable impact.
3. After discussing root causes, select one or more that **the team believes it can improve**.

***TIP:** This is an opportunity to ask members to consider the ways they/their role impact the cause and what they/their role could do to change it.*

4. Identify possible solutions to those root causes.
5. Create **SMART goals to address the root causes** (Smart,

Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound). In other words:

- SMART—Identify specific goals.
  - MEASURABLE—Identify how you will know when the goals have been achieved.
  - ACHIEVABLE—Discuss and confirm the team feels the goals are attainable.
  - RELEVANT—Make sure the goals address the root cause you identified.
  - TIME-BOUND—Set a deadline to stay on track.
6. Track progress on the goals and adjust goals as needed based on data and feedback.

**SMART goal examples:**

- **Goal: Identify cases with older youth who do not participate in the court process.**
  - By **May 31**, review all active cases involving youth age 14 and older and **create a list** of youth who have not attended their court hearings in the past six months. Document identified barriers to participation for each youth and present the findings to the team at the first June MCT meeting.
- **Goal: Encourage Members to support youth getting to court.**
  - By the end of **three months**, work with ODHS caseworkers, resource parents, and others to ensure that **100% of youth scheduled for court are offered transportation or assistance**. Track and report monthly on the number of youth who were offered support and share that report with the MCT to monitor progress.
- **Goal: Improve the number of older youth coming to court.**
  - By **six months**, increase older-youth court attendance by implementing a **standard practice for every youth age 14 and older to be offered transportation**. To achieve this:
    - Review the expectation as a team during an MCT meeting by the end of the second month.
    - Identify specific practice changes needed and assign action steps within one month of that discussion.
    - Meet by the end of month four to agree on consistent procedures for youth participation.
    - Track monthly attendance data and report improvements at the six-month mark.

***TIP:** Don't put so much pressure on creating SMART goals that it limits the team taking action. Simply encourage team members to keep these concepts in mind when suggesting action steps or changes they can make, particularly focusing on goals that are concrete and actionable.*

**Other Resources**

- [Model Court Team SharePoint Site](#): Accessible by any OJD staff member.
- [Model Court Teams Webpage](#) on OJD's public website.