



CRB REVIEWS: BUILDING TRUST AND DRIVING CHANGE

Lessons from dependency judges on the
2026 Model Court Summit NCJFCJ Judge Panel

TIMELINESS

- **View timeliness through the eyes of the child.** Delays can be distressing. Every day counts when you are separated from your family. Children want adults to make decisions quickly.
- **Urgency begins on Day 1 in care.** Evaluate agency efforts thoroughly. When CRBs ask questions, parties come prepared having done the work.
- **Practical tips:** During case prep, do the math on timelines. Learn about timelines for processes that are new to you so you become an expert in advocating for timeliness for families.

CENTERING THE VOICE OF THE FAMILY

- **CRBs serve families.** Reviews should not solely serve procedural needs; they should also meet the needs of families and be a place where they are heard.
- **Show dignity and respect.** Humanize parents for who they are instead of evaluating them for their mistakes.
- **Identity and inclusion.** Use correct names, pronunciation and pronouns.
- **Build rapport.** Use affirmation and “kudos” to give parents hope that change is possible.
- **Active listening and motivational interviewing.** CRB reviews are routine for us, but are scary for families. Acknowledge feelings/reactions. Give extra time for parents and kids to respond because they will be nervous and need it.



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CENTERING THE VOICE OF THE FAMILY

- Engage parents.** Thank parents for attending and allow them opportunity to be heard.
- Input from children:** Speak directly to children when appropriate. Consider offering for the child to leave when they are done sharing, so they can move on with their day.
- Practical tips:** Consider the order of participation: Parents (and their attorneys), child's attorney/CASA, then the state. Stay on time to avoid any continuances or runovers. If you can, remember one positive detail about the family and bring it up at the next CRB review.

CRB AS PART OF THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

- Ask questions.** Gather the information and make findings based on facts. Depth of inquiry is a strength of CRB reviews, and highly valuable to the court.
- Make "no reasonable efforts" findings when warranted.** Don't fear hurt feelings or funding loss. Negative findings lead to system improvement.
- Community and court engagement.** Engage in other roles or activities in your community that will help you remain connected with the people you serve.
- Set the tone.** Model trauma-informed approaches. Language matters; avoid stigmatizing words and be mindful of tone. Do not downplay/make light of other peoples' traumatic circumstances, even if they caused the situation.



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CRB ADVOCACY = MORE INDIVIDUALIZED CARE

• **ODHS's efforts must be consistent with the family's needs and circumstances in order to be considered reasonable.**

• **Tailored services.** Services must be individualized for the family; recommend this and insist upon it for reasonable efforts. Infuse treatment court concepts into practice.

• **Identify gaps in service plans.** Families can be driven by fear and lack of resources. Acknowledge these realities and make recommendations.

• **Address basic needs first.** Foster care is a community issue requiring community resources. Recommend assistance to meet basic needs whenever needed. Then the family can focus on safety issues and healing.

• **Take appropriate action.** Remain objective, and make appropriate findings and recommendations regardless of your personal feelings about those in front of you.

• **ASFA timelines may not fit every family.**

• **Seek continuous education.** Gain expertise on the issues that regularly come before you. Consult with your field manager and fellow board members. Share insights.