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FACT SHEET

October 2023

Dependency Representation, Administration, Funding, and Training (DRAFT) Program

The Dependency Representation, Administration, Funding, and Training (DRAFT) program was implemented in 2004 to address critical trial court needs including attorney quality, availability, and cost through the establishment of partnerships between participating courts and the Judicial Council.

Background

Juvenile courts in each of California's counties preside over cases that are filed by county social services agencies when a child has been, or is suspected of being, abused or neglected. Parents and children in these cases are statutorily entitled to legal representation, but usually cannot afford to pay for their own lawyers. The court appoints lawyers to represent indigent parents and all children, and the state pays for the lawyers through the annual appropriation of \$186.7 million in Court-Appointed Dependency Counsel (CAC) funding administered by the Council.

DRAFT

In June 2004, the Judicial Council directed staff to pilot uniform dependency counsel caseload, compensation, and performance standards as part of the DRAFT Pilot Program. Pilot program implementation began July 1, 2004 with ten courts. In 2008, the DRAFT program expanded to the current twenty DRAFT courts across the state.¹

¹ The Superior Courts of Alameda, Amador, Del Norte, El Dorado, Lake, Imperial, Los Angeles, Marin, Mendocino, Plumas, Sacramento, San Diego, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano, Sonoma, and Stanislaus Counties.

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The Judicial Council's DRAFT program provides direct oversight and administration of the CAC funding for all DRAFT courts, contracting directly with dependency providers for budget management and to ensure accountability. The DRAFT program assists with identifying and securing dependency counsel, through solicitations or otherwise, and contracts directly with providers to provide representation services.

The primary components of DRAFT include the execution of standardized court-appointed dependency counsel contracts and the development and promulgation of attorney performance and training standards.

Additional features of the DRAFT program include:

- Attorney caseload and workload reporting requirements; and
- Training and technical assistance:
 - A remotely accessible, comprehensive initial training program for new practitioners;
 - Local multidisciplinary trainings addressing county-specific barriers to permanency; and
 - A juvenile dependency website to access online trainings and training materials, in-court reference manual, and a comprehensive repository of California dependency cases.

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