

Proposed Pilot Program for Cook County Juvenile Court Draft 9/20/05

In order to assist Judges on the Juvenile Justice calendars in certain cases where a parent or guardian is unavailable, the Court, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) will conduct a six month pilot project beginning on October 1, 2005.

Under this project, Judges from the Juvenile Justice calendars may refer certain cases to a designated team of workers from DCFS, DHS, Probation, the State's Attorney's Office, the Public Defender's Office and the Presiding Judge of Juvenile Justice's Office. DCFS, DHS and Probation will investigate the cases. The State's Attorney's Office will determine whether to file a petition in Child Protection during the investigation. The Public Defender's Office will be the primary contact with the youth. The Presiding Judge's Office will serve as a liaison between the team and the Juvenile Judges. The investigating team will report back to the referring judge weekly. If the placement issue has not been resolved after 21 days, the team will present the case to the monitoring committee within two work days. The committee will decide how to resolve the issue.

When DCFS finds that a child is dependent and the State's Attorney's Office has agreed to file a petition, DCFS will take protective custody and move that child out of detention, pending the action on the petition.

Cases which may be referred to the work team include those cases in front of a Juvenile Justice Judge where:

1. the child is 13 years or older, and
2. the child is in a residential placement or the detention center, and
3. after a diligent search, probation finds that the child's parents or guardian are unavailable because
 - (i) ~~the parents/guardian of that child have died;~~
 - (ii) the parents/guardian of that child whereabouts are unknown; or
 - (iii) the parents/guardian of that child are disabled or incapacitated;

If a child is moved to the Saura Center or Neon House or designated by the Court as DHS special population after the referral has been made, the team will continue its work. If at any point in the process, the child is released to the community, the team will cease its work. If the child runs from Saura or Neon, the team will cease its work.

DCFS will provide training to Probation in conducting appropriate diligent searches. In those cases where a parent is located but remains unwilling to take the child, DHS will engage the family. In those cases where the parent is unavailable, as described above, and an alternative adult is located who is willing to take the child into a home, DCFS and Probation will conduct a background check and home study. The study will include a review of financial issues, required authority for consents and necessary services. In those cases where the court determines that this alternative adult is

acceptable, the child may be released to that adult and no case will be filed in Child Protection. In those cases where all the original criteria are met and no acceptable adult is found, the case will be referred to the State's Attorney's Office for screening to determine whether a case will be filed in Child Protection. If no Child Protection petition is filed, the case will then be referred to the monitoring committee.

A monitoring committee composed of a representative from the Presiding Judge of Juvenile Justice, the Presiding Judge of Child Protection, the DCFS' Director, the DHS' Director, State's Attorney, Public Defender, Public Guardian, Probation and two Judges from Juvenile Justice shall meet monthly to review the progress of this pilot. The work team will review the cases with the committee. The committee will issue a report at the end of the six months, summarizing the effectiveness of the pilot and making future recommendations.

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