



The Louisiana Court Improvement Program (CIP), through its statewide CIP CARE Advisory Committee, identified the need for and has been developing the concept of a Pelican Center for Children and Families (Center), which will eventually encompass all Louisiana CIP activities and provide for formalized, interdisciplinary and collaborative work agreements with relevant child welfare stakeholders throughout the state, with the goal of improving global outcomes for children.

The Center will:

- 1) allow CIP to combine the activities under its three grants (Basic, Training and Data) into a single operational structure
- 2) provide multiple opportunities for documented, ongoing, meaningful collaboration with key stakeholders, including the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the Louisiana Judicial College, Louisiana CASA, the Louisiana Public Defender Board, the Louisiana Bar Foundation, the Mental Health Advocacy Services/Child Advocacy Program, the three Louisiana Legal Services Corporations and the University Alliance of the Louisiana public university system and others
- 3) allow the pooling of resources, both in terms of dollars and heretofore uncaptured in-kind and indirect cost match being expended by collaborative members, thereby increasing opportunities for state match to draw down additional federal Title IV-E training dollars to achieve Center goals and objectives
- 4) focus initially on much-needed intensive, coordinated interdisciplinary training and education of child welfare practitioners (children's and indigent parents' attorneys, judges, child protection staff, CASAs, district and child welfare agency attorneys)

The CIP CARE Advisory Committee early in 2010 confirmed its commitment to development of the Center concept, identified potential capital funding and authorized further research and development. This work included more pointed and detailed discussions with then-DCFS Secretary Johnson and with the University Alliance, which is providing career education and training to social workers through federal funding mechanisms. Both of those conversations and others with key stakeholders were all positive and encouraging, with the DCFS Secretary pledging her full support.

All of the information gleaned from meetings with Secretary Johnson and other key child welfare stakeholders was shared with the CIP CARE Advisory Committee, which in late 2010 authorized the development of a business plan for the Center. That work was conducted by Carl Valentine of F. C. Valentine and Associates.

Throughout all of the exploratory work, the CIP CARE Advisory Committee planned to use CIP grant fund dollars to capitalize the start-up costs for the Center. With the availability of additional CIP funding when the CIP grant award cycle changed, the CIP CARE Advisory Committee identified the perfect opportunity to establish the Center and earmarked FFY 2010 CIP grant funds for that purpose.

In late 2011, the CIP secured \$546,259 as start-up funding for the Center. Those funds are presently being held in trust by the Louisiana Bar Foundation, a Center collaborative partner.

In mid-2012, Karen Hallstrom, Deputy Judicial Administrator for Children and Families, and Mark Harris, CIP Coordinator, presented an update on the Center to the Administrative Conference. At that Conference, the justices gave approval to (1) proceed with the establishment of the Pelican Center for Children and Families as outlined in the Business Plan, with the Louisiana Supreme Court serving as a collaborative partner; and (2) transition CIP programmatic activities to the Center as soon as could be reasonably accomplished.

A committee of Center collaborators worked diligently during several meetings to develop a draft set of by-laws and Articles of Incorporation for the Center, which will take the form of a Louisiana not-for-profit corporation. The draft articles and by-laws were submitted to Lauren McHugh for review and comment. Suggested revisions to strengthen and clarify the by-laws were made by Lauren, and were reviewed by the drafting committee and consulting experts to Center start-up activities.

The CIP secured commitment from persons identified to serve as initial directors and corporate officers of the Center. The Articles of Incorporation for the Pelican Center for Children & Families have now been filed with Secretary of State, and a certificate of incorporation has been issued. The initial meeting of the Board of Directors has been scheduled for February 22, 2013.

We Care for Our Own

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