



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNSEL FOR CHILDREN

President and CEO
Marvin Ventrell

Chair, Board of Directors
Christopher Wu

MEMORANDUM

To: State Court Improvement Directors

From: Marvin Ventrell, NACC President / CEO

Re: New CIP Grants / Attorney Training and Certification

Date: June 26, 2006

VIA EMAIL ONLY

It was a pleasure to speak with many of you at the Children's Bureau States and Tribes Meeting in Washington last week. A number of state CIP team members attended the NACC presentation on improving court practice through attorney training and certification. We were pleased with the response to the session and states' interest in contracting with the NACC to bring attorney certification and / or training to your jurisdictions. We are eager to work with the states to develop plans for attorney training that meet your needs. I am writing to provide some follow up information on our program should you wish to include this as a component of your state's application for the new court improvement funding.

As you know, the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 amends the Court Improvement section of Title IV-B to add new purposes that funds may be expended to ensure the safety, permanence, and well-being of children in a timely and complete manner. It provides \$20 million per year nationwide for two grants that focus on (1) improved data collection and analysis, and (2) training of judges, attorneys and other legal personnel, as well as cross training with child welfare agency staff.

The NACC has now completed the Child Welfare Attorney Certification Pilot Program funded by the Children's Bureau and is ready to begin delivery of the program or components of the program to the states. A number of states asked whether they could include the NACC certification and / or training in their grant application due August 1, 2006. The answer is yes, although we ask that you contact us first to strategize the best manner in which to include this component in your strategic plans.

Keep in mind that, according to the Children's Bureau, the applications this year would not necessarily need to include precise details of the NACC attorney training component, as the first year is part of the planning process, with implementation to occur in successive years (note: a final five year strategic plan is required for funding in 2007 and thereafter). This allows both the states and the NACC time to develop the precise nature of the training, as long as the training funds are allocated on the strategic plan.

NACC Child Welfare Attorney Certification is designed to improve the court process by raising the standard of attorney practice. As part of that effort, the NACC has also developed attorney training programs. We have now created the NACC Child Welfare Attorney Certification and Training Program (ACT), which is a bundling of the NACC's Attorney Certification and Training

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programs for states that wish to provide broad systemic improvement in the practice of child welfare law. ACT is designed to improve the delivery of legal services to children, families, and state agencies in abuse, neglect, and dependency cases by training and assessing the competence of participating attorneys. The program improves the practice of child welfare law by raising the foundation of attorney competence in a jurisdiction. Attorneys who successfully complete the ACT program are certified by the NACC and their states as *Child Welfare Law Specialists*.

ACT program training is modeled on the NACC publication *Child Welfare Law and Practice: Representing Children, Parents, and State Agencies in Abuse, Neglect, and Dependency Cases*, also known as the Red Book. In addition to the full ACT program services, the NACC is available to deliver the training component of the program alone for states that are not prepared to combine training with the competence measurement component of certification (although we recommend the bundling of the services). The training component, whether with or without certification, is a comprehensive course that tracks the child welfare legal competencies set forth in the Red Book. A preview of the training will be conducted as the pre-conference session to the NACC National Children's Law Conference in Louisville, KY on October 12, 2006. We know some states are planning to send court improvement representatives to this.

I hope this is helpful. Please contact the NACC to discuss this or acquire more information, and good luck with your CIP applications.

For more information on NACC Attorney Training and Certification, please go to:

1. Training Preview at 2006 National Conference (click on download conference brochure):
www.naccchildlaw.org/training/conference.html
2. NACC Child Welfare Law Certification (click on fact sheet and additional bullets):
www.naccchildlaw.org/training/certification.html
3. The Red Book Training Manual (click on NACC publishes new manual):
www.naccchildlaw.org/index.html

For additional information or to discuss options, please contact:

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