



Outcomes in Juvenile Dependency

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The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania created the Office of Children and Families in the Courts (OCFC) and a permanent Roundtable Initiative to bring sustained communication and collaboration within and among the many judicial districts of Pennsylvania in order to increase dependent children's chances for successful lives.

In order to attain this goal, it was necessary to gain a statewide understanding of what is occurring in each of the jurisdictions across the Commonwealth, based upon performance measurements and statistical requirements established by The National Council for Juvenile and Family Court, National Center for State Courts, and the American Bar Association on Children and the Law. With the ability to gather statewide measurements, the success of programs and initiatives could be determined.

To accomplish this, the Supreme Court asked the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC) to develop a dependency case management system for counties that did not have such a system. Modifications were made to an existing statewide system to accommodate dependency cases. These modifications included:

- The development of reports to provide caseload and case management tools for courts to meet the needs for statistical and performance measures. In many counties, agencies could

provide basic statistics about dependency cases from an agency perspective, but the courts had little or no specific detail about the number of active or active/adjudicated cases in their jurisdictions, the ages of children under court supervision, etc. One goal of this project was to provide courts with tools to understand the caseload from a court perspective.

- The ability to record the elements of certain orders in detail, including the Order of Adjudication, Dispositional Order, Permanency Review Order, and Orders Terminating Court Supervision. The outcomes of these orders that are generally the result of a court event affect specific measurements, such as the number and types of placements that are ordered for a child.
- The ability to create cases for multiple siblings within the same family efficiently, without having to re-enter key information, as well as the ability to track families using a unique family identifier.

A key element of the case management system is the ability to capture the order findings and determinations (known as "outcomes") that affect the status of the child such as an adjudication of dependency, changes in placement or in the custody of the child, or the termination of court supervision. Standardized orders were developed that

facilitate the entry of the outcomes by a clerk. In addition, in some counties, a draft order can be created in the system prior to a court event.

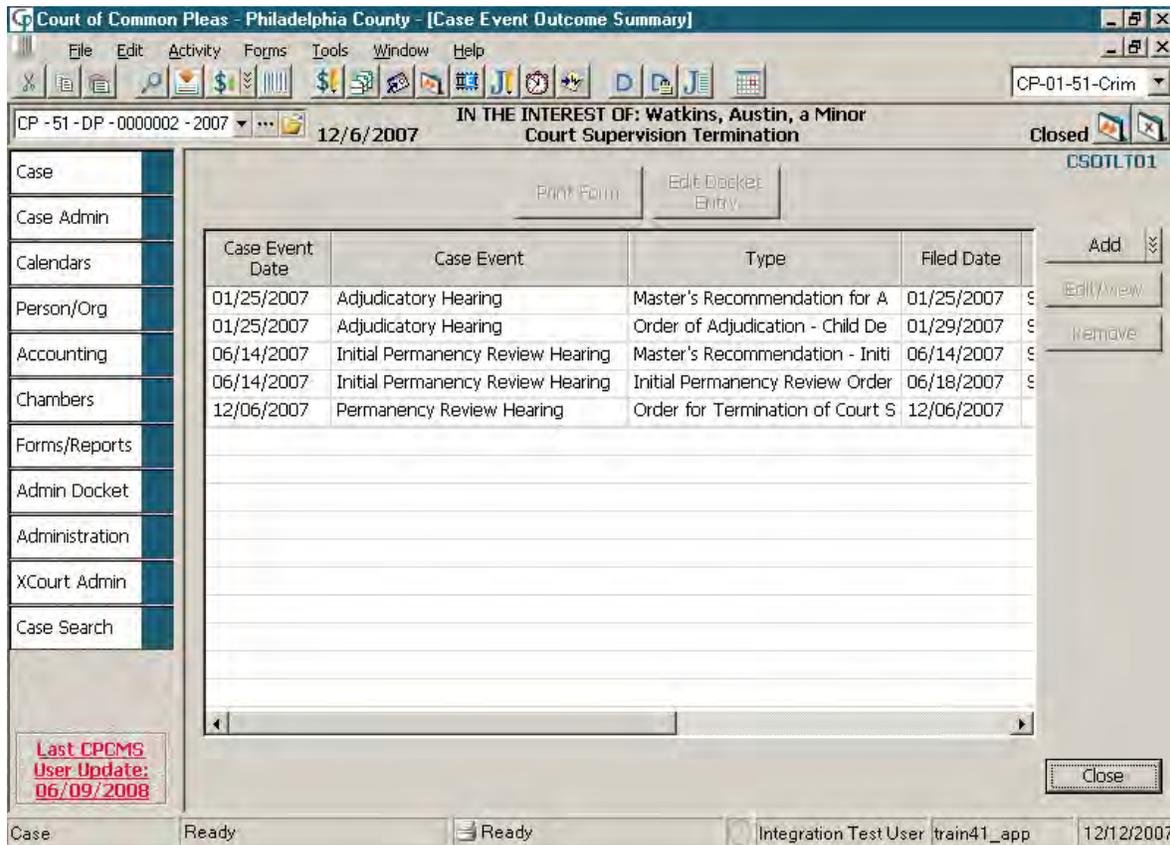
this level of review has provided a level of confidence for judicial officers.

While there has been some initial resistance to the standardization of the forms, the orders, in particular, were reviewed with the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, the Juvenile Rules Committee, and the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission. In combination with direct support from Supreme Court Justice Baer and the court as a whole,

The ultimate goal of the project is to have all counties able to generate the statistical reporting provided by the system. To date, 40 of 67 counties are live on the system, with additional counties going live each week. More time and effort will be needed for larger counties, such as Allegheny and Philadelphia, but the goal is to complete a major portion of the rollout by December 2009.

Using the Outcomes Screen

The Case Event Outcome Summary Screen allows the outcome determinations to be recorded for corresponding case events. When the screen opens, it displays any previously recorded outcomes from judicial orders or recommendations of masters.



Adding an Outcome – Case Event Information

The screenshot shows the 'Case Event Outcomes - Add/Edit' form. The 'Case Event' dropdown is set to 'Adjudicatory Hearing - 01/25/2007'. The 'Master' is 'Mann, James'. The 'Document Type' is 'Master's Recommendation for Adjudication - Child Dependent'. The 'Text' field contains the following text: 'after consideration of the motion presented by the Philadelphia County Children and Youth Services Agency, the child is found to be a Dependent Child pursuant to the Pennsylvania Juvenile Act and clear and convincing evidence of the'. The 'Filed Date' is '12/12/2007' and the 'Filed Time' is '02:01 PM'. The 'Event Outcomes' section is currently empty.

Add Case Event Information

The first step in using the Outcomes screen is to enter the Case Event information including:

- Case Event – Corresponding event where outcomes were determined.
- Master (if entering a recommendation)
- Document Type – the corresponding Type of Order or Recommendation
- Filed Date & Time – Date & Time the recommendation is filed in Clerk's office
- Text – text corresponding to the Order or Recommendation (pre-populates and can be edited).

Adding an Outcome – Outcome Details

Add Outcome Details

The second step in using the Outcomes screen is to record all of the outcome determinations and recommendations. The values entered in this grid will print on the orders and recommendations generated from CPCMS.

To add an outcome to the grid:

- Click ADD
- Select the Category & Type values to filter the values shown in the Entry Field.
- Select the appropriate Entry
- View/Edit Text – Order/Recommendation Text pre-populates based on Entry selected. Edit text as needed.
- Click APPLIES to insert the outcome into the grid.

Repeat the process until all outcomes have been recorded.

The screenshot shows the 'Case Event Outcomes - Add/Edit' form with the 'Event Outcomes' section populated. The 'Category' is 'Custody and Conditions' and the 'Type' is 'Conditions'. The 'Entry' is 'Master's Recommendation - Ordered Conditions'. The 'Text' field contains: 'CONDITIONS - The dependent child is subject to the following conditions'. The grid below shows one entry:

Category	Type	Entry	Order Text	
Custody and Conditions	Placement	Master's Recommendation - Fost	PLACEMENT - The dependent	Add
				Edit
				Remove

USING THE STANDARD FORMS

Standardized Forms were created to facilitate entry of information into the Outcome screen. The standard orders are categorized to match the available values in the dropdowns within CPCMS.

Form Example: Order of Adjudication – Child Dependent

<p>Commonwealth of Pennsylvania In the Interest Of: [Dependent Name], A Minor</p>	<p>IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF [County Name] COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA JUVENILE DIVISION DOCKET NO: CP-XX-JV-0000000-20XX FID:</p>	
<p>ORDER OF ADJUDICATION – CHILD DEPENDENT</p> <p>AND NOW, this _____ day of _____, _____, after consideration of the motion presented by petitioner, _____, it is ORDERED that _____ is found to be a Dependent Child pursuant to the Pennsylvania Juvenile Act and clear and convincing evidence of the substantiated allegation of _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>		
<p>CUSTODY AND CONDITIONS</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> CUSTODY - Temporary legal and physical custody of the aforementioned child is hereby transferred to the County Children and Youth Agency</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> PLACEMENT – The dependent child is to be placed, by the agency, in _____.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> CONDITIONS – The dependent child is subject to the following conditions _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> VISITATION – The additional condition of visitation is set forth as _____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>→</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SECTION 1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Category: Custody and Conditions</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Types: Custody Placement Conditions Visitation</p>
<p>VICTIM OF ABUSE DETERMINED</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The Court hereby finds that the above named child is a victim of child abuse as defined at 23 Pa.C.S. §6303, in that _____</p>	<p>→</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SECTION 2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Category: Victim of Abuse</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Types: Abuse Determination</p>
<p>REASONABLE EFFORTS</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NO REASONABLE EFFORTS TO PREVENT REMOVAL FROM HOME FURTHER, the Court hereby finds that to allow this child to remain in the home would be contrary to the child's welfare, and that the County Children and Youth Agency made NO Reasonable Efforts to prevent or eliminate the need for removal of this child from the home.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> REASONABLE EFFORTS TO PREVENT REMOVAL FROM HOME FURTHER, the Court hereby finds that to allow this child to remain in the home would be contrary to the child's welfare, and that the County Children and Youth Agency made _____</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Reasonable Efforts to prevent or eliminate the need for removal of this child from the home.</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Preventive services were not offered due to the necessity for emergency placement. The lack of services was reasonable under the circumstances.</p>	<p>→</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SECTION 3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Category: Reasonable Efforts</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Types: No Reasonable Efforts/Prevent Removal Reasonable Efforts/Prevent Removal</p>

USING THE STANDARD FORMS (continued)

Form Example: Order of Adjudication – Child Dependent

<p>AGGRAVATED CIRCUMSTANCES</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NO ALLEGATION – The Court hereby finds that no aggravated circumstances, as defined at 42 Pa. C.S. §6302 have been alleged.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> ALLEGED – The Court hereby finds that the following aggravated circumstances, as defined at 42 Pa. C.S. §6302 have been alleged: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NO CLEAR AND CONVINCING EVIDENCE – The Court does NOT find from clear and convincing evidence that the alleged aggravated circumstances exist.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> CLEAR AND CONVINCING EVIDENCE – The Court finds, from clear and convincing evidence, that the following aggravated circumstances exist: _____</p> <p>AGGRAVATED CIRCUMSTANCES EXIST – REASONABLE EFFORTS TO REUNIFY</p> <p>Having determined the existence of aggravated circumstances, it is ORDERED and DECREED that</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NO Further Efforts are to be made to preserve or reunify the family and that a Permanency Hearing shall be held within 30 days.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Further Efforts to preserve or reunify the family shall continue to be made.</p>	<p>SECTION 4</p> <p>Category: Aggravated Circumstances</p> <p>Type: No Allegation Alleged Alleged/Do Not Exist Alleged/Exist Reunification</p>
<p>PROGRAMS/INITIATIVES</p> <p>The Court recognizes the following initiatives or programs have been or will be used by the agency:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Family Finding</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Family Group Conferencing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Advocate / CASA</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other County Specific Initiative(s) _____</p>	<p>SECTION 5</p> <p>Category: Programs/Initiatives</p> <p>Type: Agency</p>
<p>ORDERS/FINDINGS</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> THE COURT FURTHER FINDS: _____ _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> THE COURT FURTHER ORDERS: _____ _____</p>	<p>SECTION 6</p> <p>Category: Orders/Findings</p> <p>Type: Further Findings Further Orders</p>

Next Scheduled Court Date on or about _____

BY THE COURT:

Judge [Name]

Tips for Implementation

1. Create standardized orders that allow filing office staff who enter data into the system to easily locate outcomes that need to be recorded. The AOPC forms use bolded headers and indentation to highlight the outcomes. AOPC also developed a standardized dependency petition.
2. Review all standardized forms with stakeholders, the Department of Public Welfares, rules committees, and others to ensure they meet federal funding requirements, conform to procedural rules, and accommodate business needs.
3. Provide flexibility in the use of the outcome recording mechanism to accommodate differing business processes. For example, the AOPC dependency system allows for drafting an outcome order before the court event within the system and produces a draft for review. Users can then finalize the order within the system and produce a final copy. However, some counties use blank forms that are available within the system to produce orders, which are then recorded by court staff after the event. In other cases, counties may use the outcomes screen within a courtroom to produce the order at the time of the event.
4. If the courts involved use masters, provide a mechanism for judicial approval of recommendations. In Pennsylvania, a master may make a recommendation to the Judge. The system allows for judicial staff to highlight and accept a master's recommendations with or without changes or additions by the judge.
5. Provide a mechanism for recording the same outcomes for multiple siblings within the same family. This is an enhancement that has quickly become needed for the AOPC system. The rules require that each child in the family have a separate petition and docket number. However, the "one judge, one family" initiative is encouraged and frequently the outcomes that need to be recorded for multiple children are the same or very similar. Users felt that having to enter this information on individual cases was cumbersome and a new function was built in to prevent duplication.

Summary

The use of standardized orders and the detailed recording of outcomes arising from important court events that affect the lives of dependent children and their families is a very important first step in providing for court accountability. The details recorded allow county courts to perform basic case management functions for dependency cases. In addition, they provide a mechanism for statewide reporting based on national standards. Implementing a detailed outcome reporting system requires cooperation and commitment from many offices within the court as well as interaction with rules committees, the Department of Public Welfare, and others.

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of similar technologies and adoption of similar
processes.*