



# The Resource Page

## ONE MORE ITEM ON EQUAL JUSTICE IN THE COURTS

While many resources exist addressing the themes of this issue, one recent resource is worth noting separately here. On October 1, 2020, New York State released the results of a remarkable undertaking, the Report from the Special Advisor on Equal Justice in the New York State Courts. New York's Chief Judge DiFiore commissioned Jeh Johnson and his team to undertake this landmark examination of racial bias in the New York State court system. In this 100-page report, the authors evaluate extensive and detailed data seeking to identify racial bias in the court system. The authors pursue a comprehensive review and make productive suggestions for ways to advance equality in courts. Mr. Johnson's thoughtful Executive Summary is a "must read" for any person wishing to pursue constructive steps to improve our justice system. You can find the full report on the New York Courts website, <http://www.nycourts.gov/whatsnew/pdf/SpecialAdviserEqualJusticeReport.pdf>.

## JUDICIAL WELL-BEING

Working at the courthouse has always been a high stress position that places unique pressures on the well-being of judges and courthouse personnel. The challenges of the last year have only exacerbated this perennial problem. In January of 2021, our friends at the National Center for State Courts released a helpful resource called *Addressing the Mental Health and Well-Being of Judges and Court Employees*. [https://www.ncsc.org/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0023/59603/Addressing-the-Mental-Health-and-Well-being-of-Judges-and-Court-Employees-Final.pdf](https://www.ncsc.org/__data/assets/pdf_file/0023/59603/Addressing-the-Mental-Health-and-Well-being-of-Judges-and-Court-Employees-Final.pdf). NCSC developed the guide in collaboration with the National Judicial Task Force to Examine State Court's Response to Mental Illness. This six-page guide provides tips and describes best practices for helping to build overall organizational health. Even more useful is the list of resources and links to sample programs in various states addressing mental health for court personnel. From the report, you can link directly to programs in Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Massachusetts, Michigan, Utah, and Virginia. Links for nationwide programs and resources are also provided.

## AND FOR YOUR FAMILY

Another excellent resource for well-being extends beyond us as judicial officers to our family members. The Judicial Family Institute grew out of a training program for appellate judges in 1987. An innovation for the day was that spouses and children were invited. The ensuing discussion highlighted the need for a broader approach to judicial wellness and education. The Institute website, <https://www.judicialfamilyinstitute.org/>, provides information and resources on issues such as ethics guidance for the families of judicial officers, the gamut of wellness topics but including the unique needs of family members, and a helpful guide to security issues.

## COMING SOON, EFFECTIVENESS OF REMOTE PROCEEDINGS IN FAMILY MATTERS

As a result of the pandemic, courts made a massive and unprecedented shift to remote proceedings, also called virtual hearings. This shift was particularly comprehensive in family law matters. Not long after this happened, court leaders and court observers began to wonder about the opportunities presented, such as increased appearance rates, as well as the dangers of the remoteness of remote hearings in such a personalized type of proceeding. The Anne E. Casey Foundation and Casey Family Programs funded multistate research programs to evaluate the efficacy of these virtual hearings in child welfare matters. This research is being examined by entities such as the American Bar Association's Center on Children and the Law as well the National Center for State Courts. The Center on Children and the Law has released an early summary of survey results at [https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/child\\_law/covidsurvey-1pager.pdf?ct=t\(EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2\\_7\\_2018\\_COPY\\_01\)&mc\\_cid=9b99238dc2&mc\\_eid=830598019b](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/child_law/covidsurvey-1pager.pdf?ct=t(EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2_7_2018_COPY_01)&mc_cid=9b99238dc2&mc_eid=830598019b). The summary offers an overview of what is being done across the country. For example, approaches to in-person parenting time, prioritization based on age of child, and frequency of third-party funding of technological access. This short summary is only the beginning of more comprehensive reports to follow. "Watch this space," as the marketing old slogan goes.

## FOR FAMILY LAW JUDICIAL OFFICERS

Speaking of the American Bar Association's Center on Children and the Law, their website is an informative resource that family law judicial officers should include in their regular reviews. The Center devotes a portion of their website to resources for courts, [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public\\_interest/child\\_law/project-areas/national-court-projects/#](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_interest/child_law/project-areas/national-court-projects/#). The Center regularly posts informative articles for judges about innovative approaches to family law issues. They also post a series of "action alerts" for judges on new issues and developments related to child welfare. These "action alerts" are created with the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. A recent posting is an excellent examination of the role of the judge in prioritizing education when the child is in third-party care, such as foster care. Another "alert" addressing an issue critical to family law court leaders, the ever present problem of funding. In "Leveraging Federal IV-E Funding to Support Child and Parent Representation," the Center and the Council deliver on the title. They give you information and ideas about accessing one of the more recent funding sources that may not be widely known. Anyone looking for opportunities to enhance family law services at your court will want to review this "alert."

## COVID-19 AND STATE COURTS

**The National Center for State Courts is collecting information on a variety of ways that COVID-19 has impacted the courts. Just go to <https://www.ncsc.org/> and you will see, among other things, links to State Court COVID-19 websites and information on how states are dealing with jury trials and in-person proceedings.**