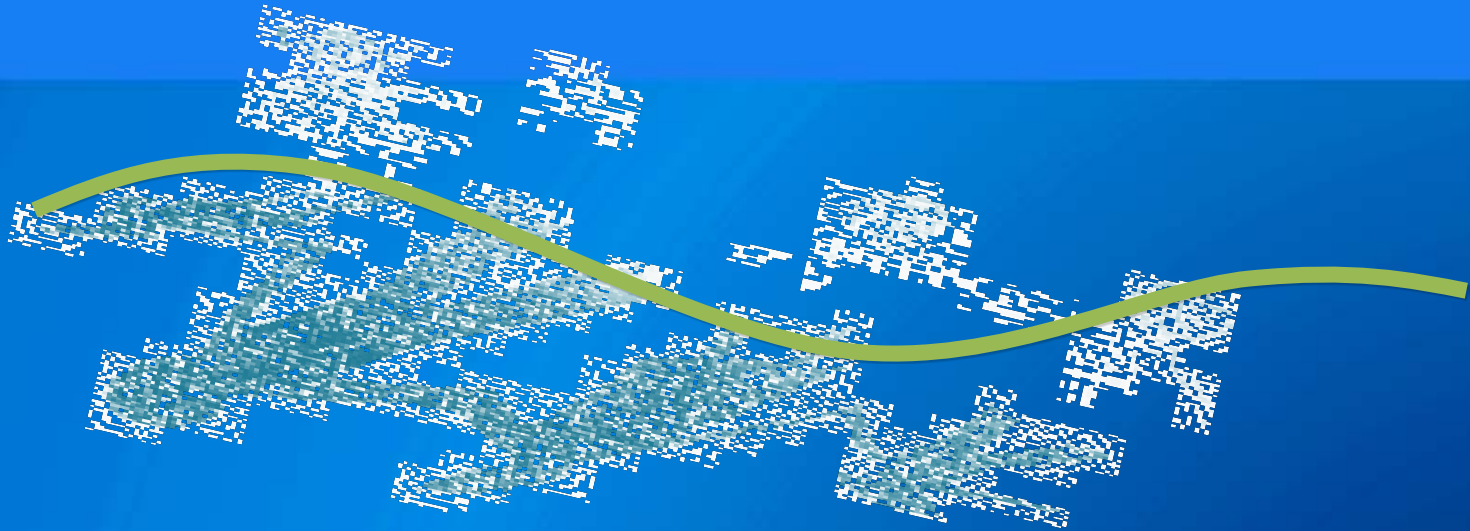


Strategies to Support School Stability and Continuity: The Pima County Experience



The Honorable Suzanna Cuneo
Pima County Juvenile Court
Commissioner
April 12, 2011

Pima County Juvenile Court Committee to Improve Education Outcomes for Court-Involved Youth

- Established January 2003 as Model Dependency Court Subcommittee
- Began with 12 members representing Child Protective Services, several school districts, Casey Family Programs, Juvenile Court Staff, CASA Program and the Attorney General's Office.

Pima County Juvenile Court Committee to Improve Education Outcomes for Court-Involved Youth

- Initial focus was education issues affecting youth in foster care primarily in the areas of education records, enrollment and school stability.
- Committee expanded its focus in 2005 to include all court-involved youth, including delinquencies.

Pima County Juvenile Court Committee to Improve Education Outcomes for Court-Involved Youth

- Currently has approximately 100 participants representing numerous school districts, Pima Community Superintendent's Office, Pima Community College, County Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, group care facilities, attorneys, Child Protective Services, CASA, Attorney General's Office, Probation and Detention.

Pima County Juvenile Court Committee to Improve Education Outcomes for Court-Involved Youth

- Following a community-wide education summit in October 2007, the committee converted its format to an education forum which meets 3-4 times per year and focuses on cross training and collaboration in two areas: Keeping kids in school and alternatives to suspension/expulsion/arrest.

Projects Addressing School Stability and Continuity

- School records: Created court order for release of school records to child welfare case managers. Order signed by dependency judge same day dependency petition is filed.
- Linking with McKinney/Vento: ensure school-aged children placed out of home remain in their home schools when appropriate.

Projects Addressing School Stability and Continuity

- Training community educators focusing on McKinney/Vento liaisons and unique educational issues affecting children in out-of-home care (Endless Dreams).
- Training child welfare case managers on the rights of children in out-of-home care to remain in their home schools or to immediate enrollment if there is a change in school placement (McKinney/Vento).
- Development of an Education Advocacy Manual.

Projects Addressing School Stability and Continuity

- “Accountability Conferencing” as alternative to suspension and expulsion.
- Training on modified version of “Judicial Checklist” in dependency cases commencing with first Preliminary Protective Hearing.
- Training out-of-home placement units to locate emergency placements for children within their home school district or as close geographically to that district whenever possible at the time of the child’s removal.

Projects Addressing School Stability and Continuity

- Discussion of educational issues: school records, special education issues and school placement at the Team Decision Making meeting following the child's removal.
- Development of the position of Juvenile Court Education Programs Coordinator within the Juvenile Court to assist both Child Protective Services case managers and Probation Officers on education issues primarily in the area of enrollment and school records.

Keys to Success

- Judicial leadership
- Community collaborations
- Developing and updating a list of key community contacts including educators, child welfare and probation
- Training, training, training
- Technical assistance and collaboration with national organizations primarily Casey Family Programs and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

Challenges

- McKinney/Vento and school placement: Transportation costs and geographical distance.
- Special education issues: Obtaining current IEP's, appropriate school placements and support.
- Unnecessary suspensions and expulsions of youth in out-of-home care.

Resources

- Casey Family Programs
- National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges
- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Contacts

Judge Suzanna Cuneo
Pima County Juvenile Court Commissioner
sue.cuneo@pcjcc.pima.gov

CPS: Carol Punske,
Assistant Program Manager,
cpunske@azdes.gov

Court: Cathleen Fitzgerald,
Education Programs Coordinator,
cathleen.fitzgerald@pcjcc.pima.gov