

Judicially Led,  
Collaboratively  
Driven



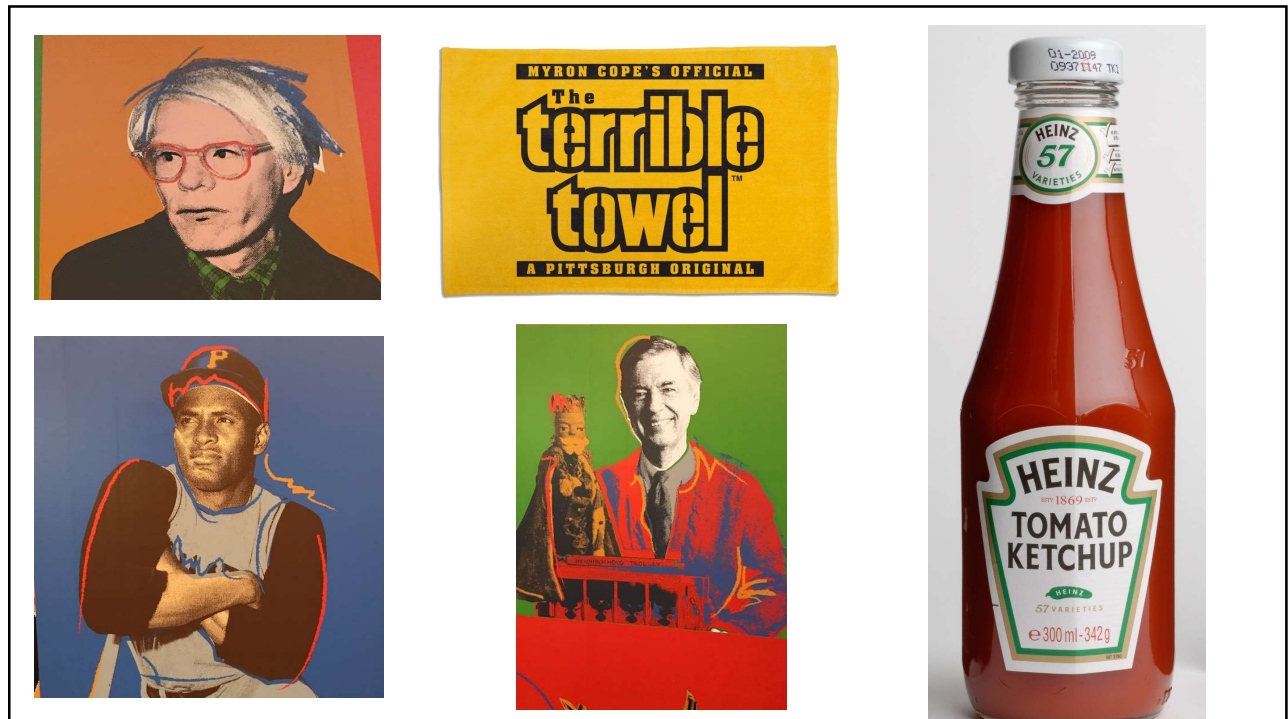
Dependency  
System  
Reform

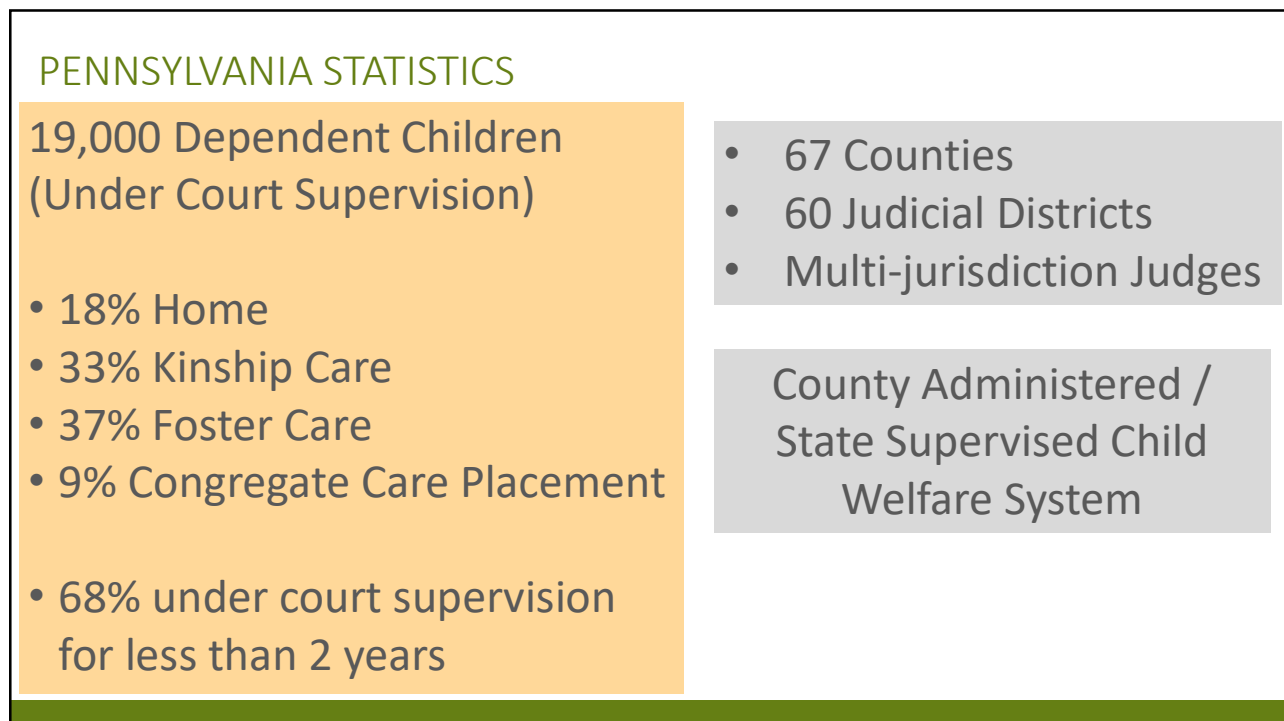
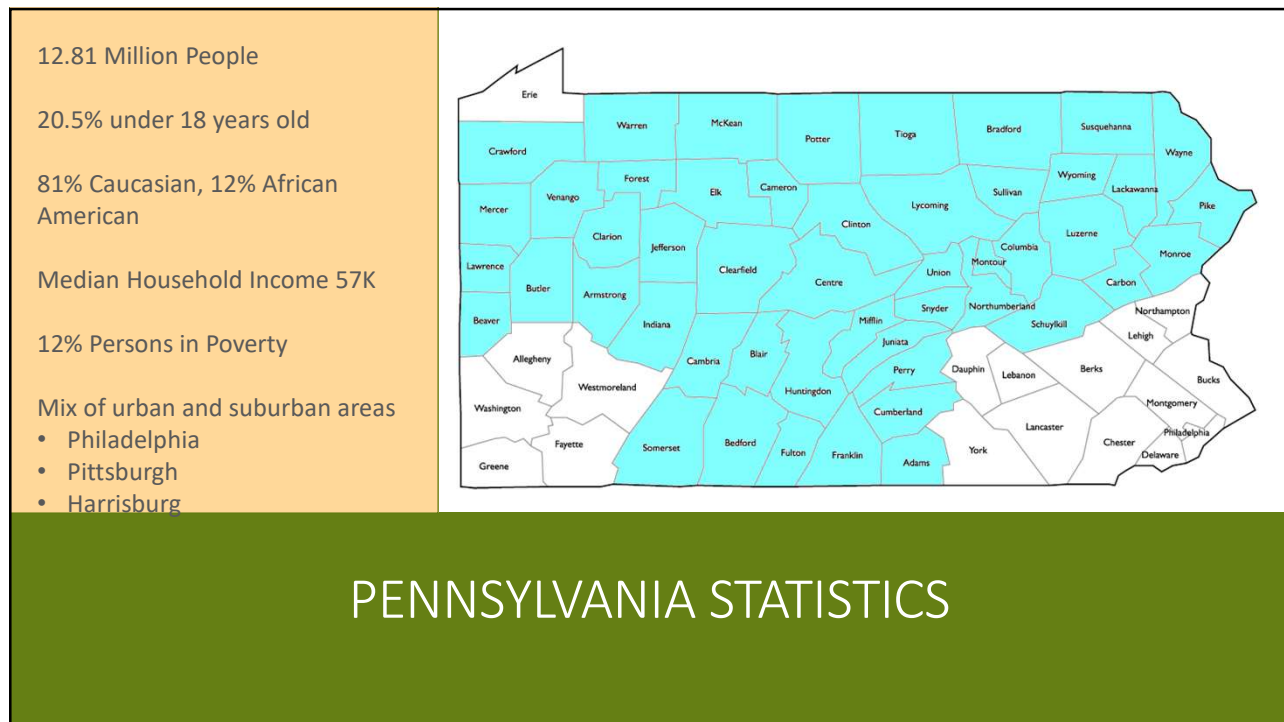
## THE PENNSYLVANIA EXPERIENCE

ENHANCING SAFETY, PERMANENCY AND WELL-BEING THROUGH COLLABORATION

## TODAY'S AGENDA

- Snapshot of Pennsylvania
- Differences & Similarities
- Our Assumptions
- Pennsylvania's Plan & Structure
- Outcomes/Successes
- Judicial Leadership
- Embedding and Sustaining Change





## DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

### DIFFERENCES

- Pennsylvania slightly larger population than North Carolina (13M vs. 10M)
- North Carolina is slightly more diverse than Pennsylvania - higher percentage African Americans
- North Carolina slightly higher percent persons in poverty
- North Carolina has 100 Counties vs. Pennsylvania's 67
- Pennsylvania has standardized court orders used by every jurisdiction

## DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

### Similarities

- Roughly same median household income (slightly higher than 50K)
- Roughly same percentage of population under the age of 18 (roughly 20%)
- Unemployment rate both around 4%
- Few large metropolitan areas and with a good percentage of rural areas as well

## Similarities with Dependency Systems

- Children come into placement from both urban and rural areas
- Significant issues with families struggling with substance abuse
- The majority of children in the system are neglect rather than abuse cases
- Poverty, drugs (opioids), alcohol, mental health and housing are all concerns
- substance abuse and mental health resources are needed
- Land mass/travel issues



PENNSYLVANIA'S STATE PLAN

## Pennsylvania's Creation of a State Plan



Children & families  
deserve better...in fact,  
they deserve the very  
best we can give...

## CREATING A STATE PLAN

1. Does our current system provide the very best care for every child under court supervision?

2. Would I feel comfortable / confident if my own child or grandchild entered this system?



## Pennsylvania's Dependency System 12 Years Ago

- PA county “fiefdoms”
- Inconsistency of practice (court & agency)
- Inconsistency of outcomes (children & families)
- Inconsistency in service delivery and availability
- Families were told what to do (not involved or leading)
- Children were placed with strangers and siblings separated
- Children in congregate care
- Visitation happened once/every other week
- Fathers (and paternal relatives) not involved

- Everything happens in relationships....they are the key to all change.
- Leadership is key to system reform beginning BUT involving those impacted by change in the development of that change is key to system reform being sustained
- There is an urgency to the work we do.... every day matters to a child/family
- Most people (court, agency community) want to help children and families.

## OUR ASSUMPTIONS

- Every child deserves to be safe both emotionally and physically
- No child should ever “grow up” in temporary foster care
- No child should EVER leave care without being connected to safe, caring adults
- EVERY child needs a safe family and it is our responsibility to ensure this.... not doing so is OUR failure
- If these assumptions do not fit, it is time to look for another occupation

## OUR ASSUMPTIONS

## GROUND RULES

Used concepts of FGDM as structure (strengths, concerns, solution focused approach)

Included those who would be impacted by the change in conversation to identify change strategies

Everything is voluntary...until the group is ready for it not to be

Role model the change we want to see

Judicially led but collaboratively administered



- Get the right people to the table.....need your leaders to lead the effort.....
- Identify the practices already happening that show positive results (data not anecdotal stories)
- Collectively select the practices you want to support (look for things that can produce positive results quickly.... success breeds success)
- Develop a shared written vision, widely disperse it and tie all efforts to that vision

## Pennsylvania's State Plan



Get the right people to the table..... need your leaders leading the effort..... involve people who will be implementing the change... This is true for systems and true for families.

- Supreme Court Justice & Child Welfare Deputy Secretary leading
- Dependency Judges and Child Welfare Administrators
- Attorneys, Child Advocates, National Experts
- Legislators and other elected officials
- Children and Families

## Pennsylvania's State Plan

Gathered data..... critical

- Court Data
- Child Welfare Agency Data
- Census Data
- Analyze the Data

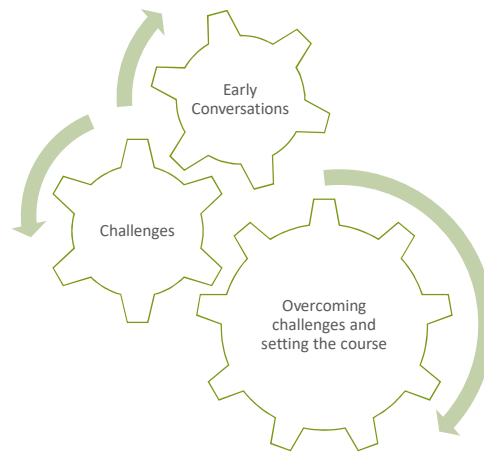


Identify where you are and where you want to be

Data informed and Data Driven

## CREATING A STATE PLAN

- Early Conversations
- Recognized there would be challenges
- overcoming challenges and setting the course for reform



## OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

- **Too Busy**..... substitute rather than layering more activities and get rid of what doesn't work
- **No money** – Identify all the changes you'd like to make, then prioritize by what will have the greatest impact to children and families - think outside the box. The structure we created in PA costs very little money.
- **Data** - You have to gather it, make sure its right and revisit often
- **“Judicial Collaborations”** – administrative issues vs. case specific
- **Confidentiality** – do your research and get this out of the conversation
- **Trust** comes more quickly than you might imagine... common vision helps
- **Ongoing Motivation**.... success breeds success, excitement breeds excitement and giving people a voice also gives ownership.




IT ALL COMES DOWN TO RELATIONSHIPS



## THE PROCESS

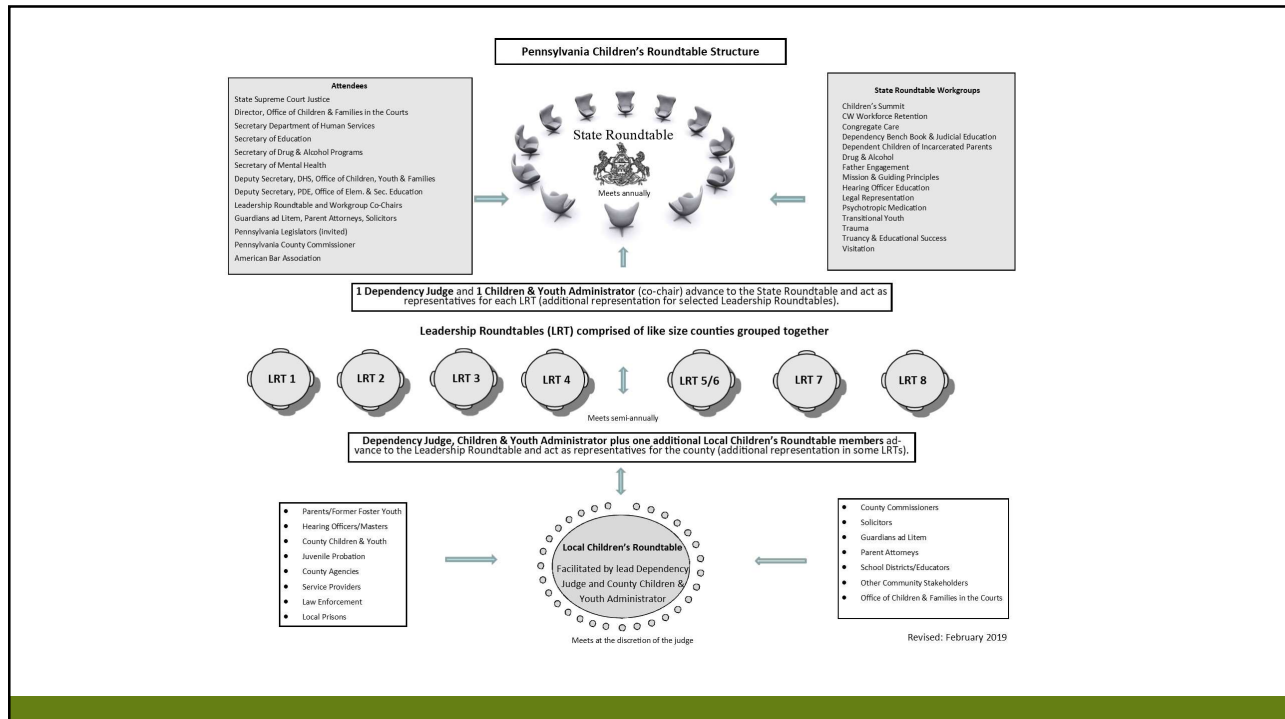
CREATE A STRUCTURE FOR COMMUNICATION, DECISION MAKING AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

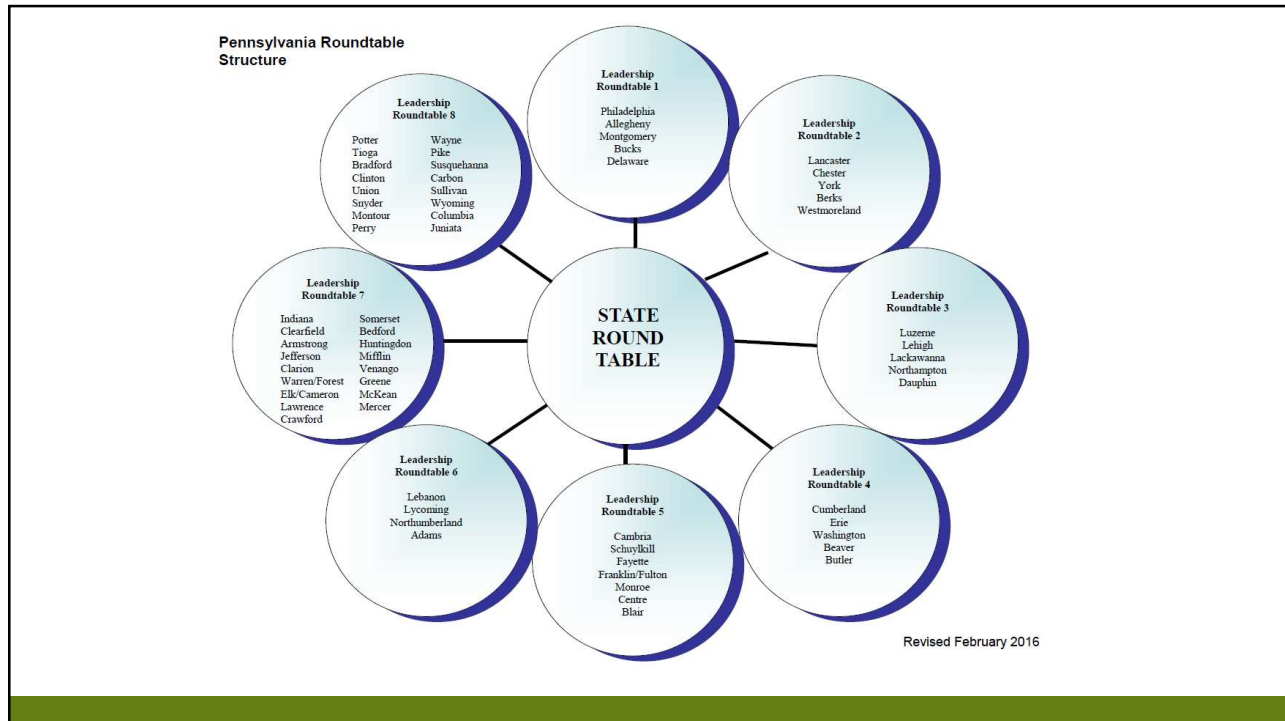
<p><i>Mission and</i> <i>Guiding Principles</i> <i>For</i> <b>PENNSYLVANIA'S</b> <b>CHILD DEPENDENCY SYSTEM</b></p>  <p>Prepared By: CHILDREN'S ROUNDTABLE INITIATIVE OFFICE OF CHILDREN &amp; FAMILIES IN THE COURTS SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA</p> <p>May 2009</p>	<p>Protect Children;</p> <p>Promote Strong Families;</p> <p>Promote Child Well-being;</p> <p>Provide Timely Permanence</p>
--	--

# PENNSYLVANIA'S CHILDREN'S ROUNDTABLE STRUCTURE

Our mechanism for:

- information dissemination
- education
- collaboration
- system reformation
- relationship building





**Administrative Office  
of PA Courts**

**Office of Children and  
Families in the Courts**

## EXAMPLES OF ROUNDTABLE WORK



FATHER ENGAGEMENT

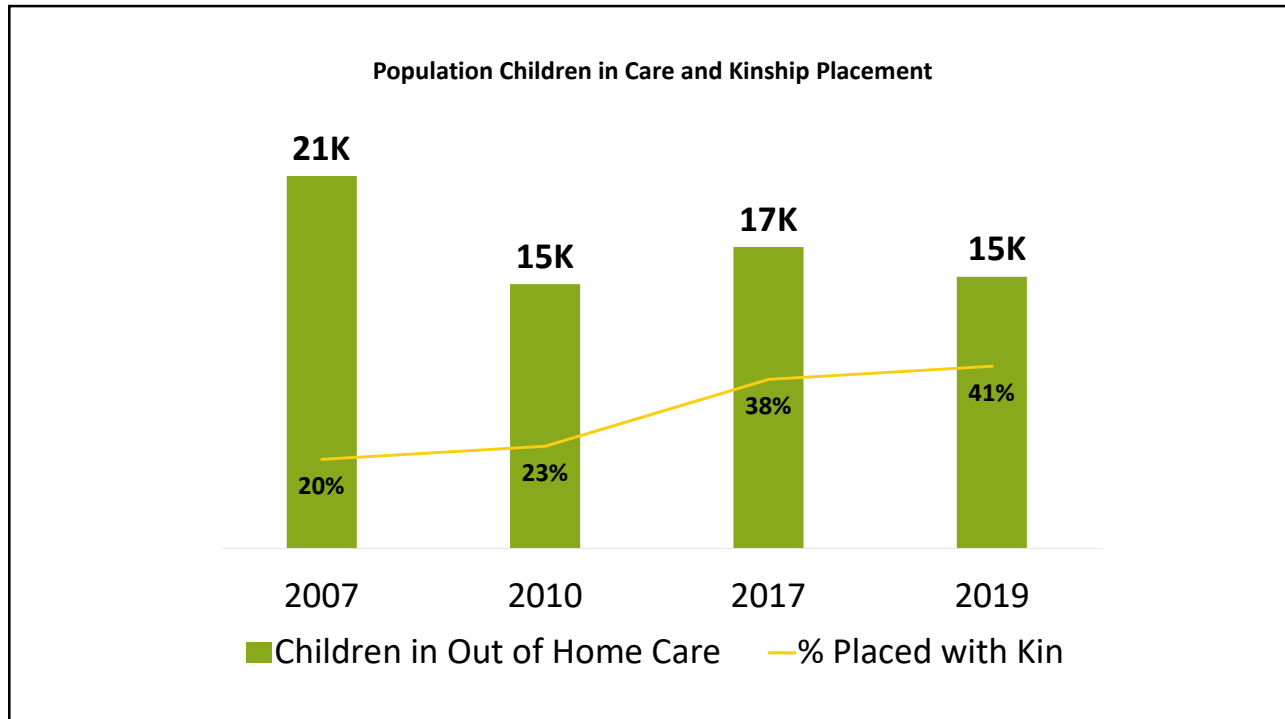


## 3 MONTH COURT REVIEWS



## KINSHIP





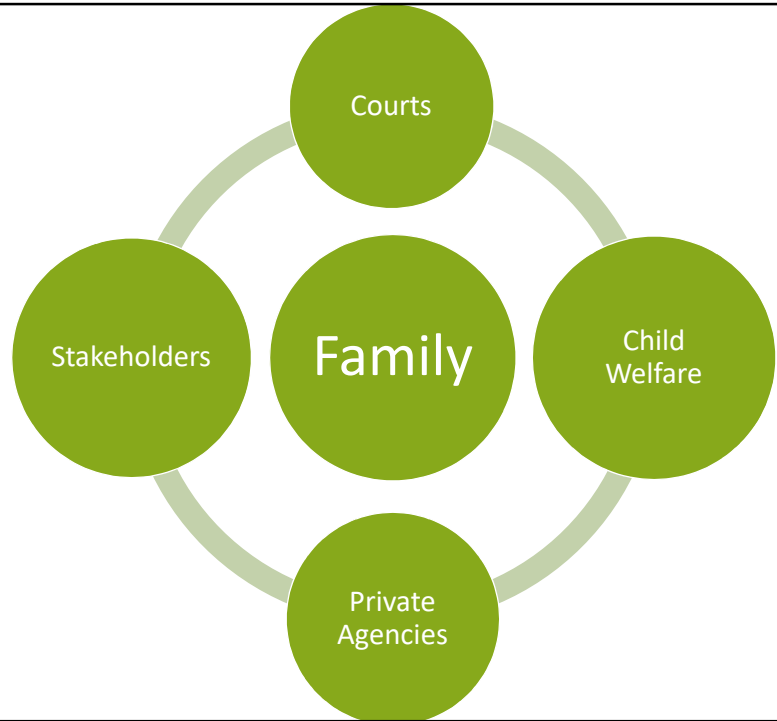
## Dependency System Reform



A Call to Action  
for Judges

on and off the  
bench

Who is responsible?



**Collaboration Rocks!**





JUDICIALLY LED, COLLABORATIVELY DRIVEN



JUDICIAL RESPONSIBILITY

*"Too many people see leadership as the right to dominate rather than the responsibility to serve."*



*Begin with Strengths*  
*End with Strengths*



1. Does our current system provide the very best care for every child under court supervision?
2. Would I feel comfortable / confident if my own child or grandchild entered this system?
3. How might we work together through a judicially led, collaboratively driven approach to enhance our current dependency system?



**THANK YOU!!**

**It Has Been  
An Honor  
&  
A Privilege**