

# PRACTICE NOTES

For North Carolina's Child Welfare Workers

From the NC Division of Social Services and the Family and Children's Resource Program

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*In summarizing research, we try to give you new ideas for refining your practice. However, this publication is not intended to replace child welfare training, regular supervision, or peer consultation—only to enhance them.*

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## CHILD WELFARE, JUVENILE JUSTICE, AND THE COURTS

The child welfare system is responsible for the safety, permanence, and well-being of the children it touches. We are charged with ensuring they are protected from abuse and neglect, stay in their homes whenever possible, have stability in their living situations, and preserve their past connections. On top of this, we must also meet children's educational, physical, and mental health needs and increase the capacity of their families to meet their needs.

That's a pretty tall order. So how can these goals be attained when the youth in question is also deemed delinquent in the juvenile justice system?

### CHILD MALTREATMENT

Over the past 30 years research has clearly and consistently identified childhood victimization and maltreatment as a risk factor for subsequent delinquency and violence. According to the Child Welfare League of America's Juvenile Justice Division (2002), abused or neglected children are more likely than other children to be arrested:

- As juveniles (27% vs. 17%),
- As adults (42% vs. 33%), and
- For committing a violent crime (18% vs. 14%).

CWLA's research also shows that abused and neglected children tend to be younger at their first arrest, commit nearly twice as many offenses, and are arrested more frequently.

### PLACEMENT AND DELINQUENCY

What do we know specifically about juvenile delinquency and the youth in foster care? Delinquency rates are about 47% greater for youth associated with at least one substantiated report of maltreatment (Ryan & Testa, 2005).

A recent study by Ryan, Herz, Hernandez, and Marshall (2007) sought to determine whether there is a child welfare bias in juvenile justice processing. They found that children whose delinquency cases originated in foster care were less likely to receive probation than those children not in foster care. Results also indicated that the child welfare system itself is a significant reason African American youth are disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system. Finally, the study found that youth coming from the child welfare system are younger and more likely to be female.

This link to offending at a younger age is not good news, since other research found young offenders to be three times more likely to become serious violent offenders (Burns, et al., 2003).

These findings have significant implications for all of us connected with the child welfare system. Although not all maltreated children will commit a delinquent act, some will. Therefore we have a duty to understand the juvenile justice system and how it interacts with the child welfare system, and we need to know how to decrease the delinquent behavior of youth in foster care.

This issue of *Practice Notes* will provide you with some of the information you need to fulfill this responsibility. ♦



Photo: Ellen Ozier

**Not all maltreated children commit delinquent acts, but some do. We must know how to respond.**

## JUVENILE JUSTICE: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

A little more than 100 years ago, we had one system of justice in the United States. We treated children as we would treat adults when they committed a crime. We even put children as young as seven years old to death for their crimes (Taylor, et al., 2002).

In the late 1800's, children were considered property and often sold by their parents to wealthy businessmen. Children were placed in the workforce or apprenticed at very young ages.

During this period a group of women known as the "child savers" were successful in convincing some key politicians to treat children who committed crimes differently than adults. As a result, in 1899 the juvenile justice system was born. Child labor practices, child abuse, runaways, and other issues facing juveniles were also reviewed during this time.

### CHANGING ATTITUDES

Just as the child welfare system has experienced different philosophical trends over the years, so has the juvenile justice system. The basic assumption that led to the creation of a separate system of justice was that, compared to an adult, a child is less mature and therefore less capable of intent when committing a crime. Because of their limited capacity for intent, it was believed that children could be rehabilitated more easily. This is often referred to as the **traditional model** of juvenile justice. Under this model it was believed that the best interests of the child were always paramount and that treatment and rehabilitation could prevent further delinquency.

Around 1960, another way of looking at juvenile offenders emerged and more similarities to the adult criminal justice system were introduced. Children, no longer viewed as property,

were seen as having rights and as deserving "due process." They now had a right to counsel, to notice of charges, to confront and cross-examine witnesses, to remain silent, and to be protected from double jeopardy. Under this **due process model** of juvenile justice it was believed that the best interests of the child should be sought while providing fundamental fairness and due process.

In the early 1980's to present day, the model guiding the juvenile justice system changed again. Under the current **punitive model** the focus is more on the best interests of society rather than on the child's best interests. The more serious the crime, the more society needs to be protected from the culprit. This is more aligned with the adult criminal justice system. This approach to juvenile justice attempts to prevent future offenses by punishing youth, removing them from society, and holding them accountable.

### TYPES OF OFFENSES

In North Carolina the juvenile justice system is notified of a youth's delinquent behavior by parents, social services, or law enforcement.

### YOU SHOULD KNOW

- A child must be six years old in North Carolina to be adjudicated in the juvenile justice system.
- North Carolina does not allow jury trials in juvenile proceedings.
- A child 16 years of age or older is automatically waived to adult court and subject to the same penalties as adults, though he or she is not subject to the death penalty.
- If the crime is severe, the court can ask that a child as young as 13 years old be waived to adult court.

**Delinquency** is any behavior prohibited by state juvenile law and includes anything from underage drinking to murder. These offenses fall into two categories: delinquent and status. A **delinquent act** is anything that would be a crime if committed by an adult. A **status offense** is an act that would not be considered a crime if committed by an adult, but which is forbidden to children. For example, running away, violating curfew, skipping school (truancy), underage drinking, and smoking *cont. p. 3*

### JUVENILE CRIMES AND OFFENSES IN NC, 2006

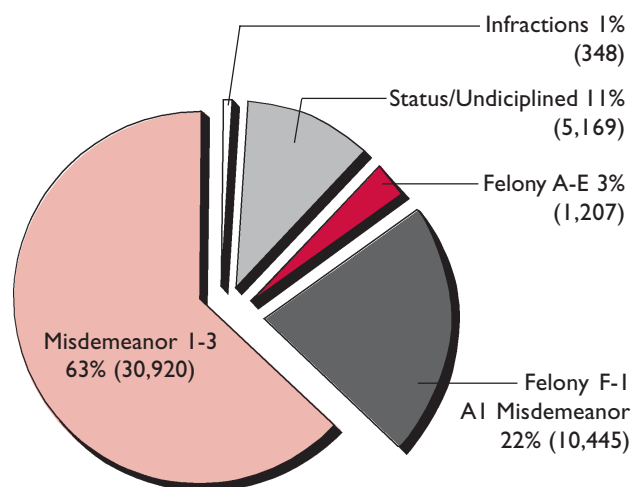
Figure 1

Total Complaints Received: 48,089

Delinquent Complaints: 89%

Complaints Committed by Males: 75%

Undisciplined Complaints: 11%



Source: NCDJDP, 2007

from p. 2

are all status offenses. A youth can also be alleged to be **undisciplined** if he or she is deemed by a judge to be incorrigible or ungovernable.

### JUVENILE JUSTICE IN 2006

According to the NC Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 29 youth were transferred to adult court in 2006. These youth, if convicted, would be placed in one of the two youth prisons operated by the Department of Corrections. As of 2005, our state had 44 youth serving sentences of life without parole.

In 2006, North Carolina received 48,089 complaints against juveniles. Eleven percent were for status offenses. The majority of the status offenses were for ungovernable youth, followed by truancy and youth who had run away.

As Figure 1 shows, the remaining 89% of the complaints were considered delinquent complaints (misdemeanors 63%, felonies 25%, infractions 1%). Seventy-five percent were committed by males; 41% were committed by White youth and 50% were committed by African-American youth.

Although most of these cases were processed by the juvenile court system, some were handled by **Family Courts**. Characterized by a less adversarial approach to justice, Family Court programs currently exist in 11 districts (including 18 counties) in North Carolina. To learn more about them and how they serve families and children connected with child welfare, turn the page. ♦

**The NC Dept. of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's 2006 annual report is online:**  
<[www.ncdjjdp.org](http://www.ncdjjdp.org)>

## JUVENILE JUSTICE TERMS

North Carolina child welfare agencies must complete the DSS Critical Incident Report (rev. June 2007) for any youth who commits the status offense of running away (for more than 24 hours) and for any youth who commits a delinquent act and gets "arrested." Yet when you speak to police about what's happened, do they use the word "arrested"? No. Police will tell you the youth was "taken into custody," which for a juvenile is the same as arrest. This is one of many different terms child welfare professionals must understand when working with youth who come in contact with the juvenile justice system. To help you we provide the following outline of the different terms used by the adult and juvenile justice systems.

Juvenile Justice	Criminal Justice
<b>Adjudication</b> – Decision by a juvenile court judge that the juvenile committed a delinquent act	Conviction
<b>Adjudication Hearing</b> – A hearing to determine whether there is evidence beyond a reasonable doubt to support the allegations against the juvenile	Trial
<b>Aftercare</b> – Supervision of a juvenile after release from an institution	Parole
<b>Commitment</b> – Decision by a juvenile court judge to send the adjudicated juvenile to an institution	Sentence to prison
<b>Delinquent Act</b> – A behavior committed by a juvenile that would have been a crime if committed by an adult	Crime
<b>Delinquent</b> – A juvenile who has been adjudicated of a delinquent act in juvenile court or family court	Criminal
<b>Detention</b> – Short-term secure confinement of a juvenile to protect the juvenile and/or society	Confinement in jail
<b>Detention Center</b> – A facility for short-term secure confinement of juveniles prior to court disposition or execution of a court order. NC has ten detention centers; four counties operate their own centers.	Jail
<b>Disposition</b> – The sanction imposed on a juvenile who has been adjudicated in juvenile court	Sentence
<b>Disposition Hearing</b> – A hearing held after a juvenile has been adjudicated to determine what sanction should be imposed on the juvenile	Sentencing hearing
<b>Institution</b> – A facility for long-term secure confinement of juveniles after adjudication. NC has five <b>Youth Development Centers</b> where youth between ages 6 and 15 are committed for treatment for a minimum of six months.	Prison
<b>Petition</b> – A document that states the allegations against a juvenile and asks a juvenile court to adjudicate the juvenile	Indictment
<b>Taken into Custody</b> – The action on the part of a police officer to obtain custody of a juvenile accused of committing a delinquent act	Arrest

Adapted from Taylor, Fritsch & Caeti, 2002

# FAMILY COURTS IN NORTH CAROLINA

The preceding article described how attitudes about justice for juvenile offenders have shifted over the years, moving away from rehabilitation and towards punishment. The dominance of the punitive model of juvenile justice is by no means complete, however. Today a very different approach to handling juvenile justice, child welfare, and other family-related legal proceedings is making headway across the U.S. In North Carolina this approach is called Family Court.

## FAMILY COURTS

Family Courts emerged in the 1990s in an attempt to improve the way courts handle domestic cases. Specifically, Family Courts are an effort to embrace and implement certain approaches to judicial procedure and the handling of court cases in order to:

- Respond more effectively to the increasingly complex challenges faced by families and children involved with the judicial system (Future Commission, 1996).
- Improve the experiences of children during the court process, especially children involved with the child welfare system (Kirk & Griffith, 2006).
- Expedite permanence and achieve other desirable child welfare outcomes (Kirk & Griffith, 2006).
- Address court administration issues, particularly the overcrowding of District Court dockets.

## HOW THEY WORK

Family Court programs exist in 11 North Carolina districts (see box). In each district they operate under the auspices of the Chief District Court Judge, with support from the Court Programs and Management Services Division

### FAMILY COURT PROGRAMS IN NC

Family court programs currently exist in 11 districts (including 18 counties) in North Carolina:

#### Established as Original Pilot Sites in 1999

District 14: Durham County

District 20: Anson, Richmond, Stanly, and Union Counties

(2005 Legislative Split: District 20A: Anson, Richmond, and Stanly Counties and District 20B: Union County)

District 26: Mecklenburg County

#### Established in 2000

District 5: New Hanover and Pender Counties

District 6A: Halifax County

District 12: Cumberland County

#### Established in 2001

District 8: Greene, Lenoir, and Wayne Counties

District 25: Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba Counties

#### Established in 2004

District 28: Buncombe County

#### Established in 2005

District 10: Wake County

of the NC Administrative Office of the Courts.

North Carolina's Family Courts hear issues relating to the families assigned to them. This includes juvenile delinquency; child maltreatment and dependency; termination of parental rights; domestic violence; child custody and visitation rights; and divorce and related financial issues such as child support, alimony, and equitable distribution of property.

In terms of day-to-day operations, the local chief District Court judge administers each Family Court. He or she is assisted by a Family Court administrator and one or more case coordinators assigned to domestic and juvenile court.

## HOW ARE THEY DIFFERENT?

Following are some of the things that make Family Courts different from traditional District Courts. However, it is important to note that because each Chief District Court Judge has a great deal of discretion, practices vary among North Carolina's Family Courts.

**Philosophy.** The mission of Family Court is to (1) help resolve cases involving children and families through combined efforts of the family, the Court, and community services, (2) approach each case in a way that is not overly adversarial or intrusive but always in a just, timely, and efficient manner, and (3) be courteous, safe, and accessible and to provide quality service to those in need (Family Court Advisory Committee, 2007).

**Timeframes.** The goal of Family Court is to resolve all cases within one year of filing.

**Management.** In Family Court, the court sets the calendar and manages the case from filing to disposition. Both judges and court staff receive extensive training on the fundamentals of effective case flow management (AOC, 2007).

**Family Court Administrators.** Some child welfare agencies have been able to resolve longstanding concerns about their interaction with the court system (e.g., long, unproductive wait times for workers on court days) by working closely with their Family Court administrator.

**One Judge, One Family.** In Family Courts, a recommended best practice is to have a single judge (or team of judges) assigned to each family. He or she hears every issue involving that family, whether it is divorce, child custody, child maltreatment, dependency, or delinquency.

Chief District Court Judge H. Paul McCoy, who administers the Family Court in District 6A (Halifax County) says this approach "helps the case proceed through

**"I wanted to create a less adversarial, more user-friendly environment for families to resolve their disputes in an expeditious manner."  
~Chief District Court Judge H. Paul McCoy**



the court more expeditiously since the judge is familiar with the family and the case file and only has to go forward from the last order in the file rather than reviewing the entire file to familiarize himself with the case.”

**Day One Conferences.** Another recommended best practice being applied in some Family Courts, Day One Conferences (also called “child planning conferences”) are court-facilitated gatherings held soon after the filing of an abuse/neglect petition. These events bring everyone—including schools, DSS, mental health, parents, Guardians ad Litem, and the courts—to the table in a relaxed, respectful environment. The purpose of these meetings is to determine if placement can be found with family or friends, what services need to be initiated immediately to expedite resolution of the problems that led to the removal of the children, and to establish a visitation schedule appropriate to the developmental needs of the children and the circumstances of the family (AOC, 2006).

Many times, the things decided in these conferences are what families and other parties choose for themselves. This can feel much better to families than having things mandated by the court. One child welfare professional told us that as a result of Day One Conferences, “Ninety-eight percent of the time we are able to have an agreement in place before we go in front of the judge.”

In their 2006 evaluation of North Carolina’s Family Court pilots, Kirk and Griffith identified Day One Conferences as the most important component of Family Court when it comes to child welfare cases.

**Emphasis on Services.** Many Family Courts use mediation and other dispute resolution programs to resolve issues so the court does not have to issue a judgment or order. However, when a judge does need to hear matters or issue orders involving a family, case coordinators ensure there is nothing to delay the prompt resolution of the issue before the court.

**Local Family Court Advisory Committees.** These advisory committees, which usually meet two to four times a year, serve as an important way for stakeholders (including DSS) to bring their concerns to the attention of the Family Court and to suggest strategies for resolving these concerns and any other issue the court raises with them.

## DO THEY DELIVER?

Do Family Courts do a better job than traditional District Courts when it comes to achieving positive outcomes for families and children?

If your focus is on child welfare outcomes, the current evidence suggests the answer is yes. Kirk and Griffith found that children whose cases were handled by Family Court experienced fewer placements, fewer placement chang-

## BENEFITS OF FAMILY COURT

A 2006 evaluation found that compared to children whose cases were handled in District Court, children served by Family Court experienced:

- Fewer placements
- Fewer placement changes, and
- Fewer days in out-of-home care



In its March 2007 review of North Carolina’s child welfare system, the federal government found Family Courts to be a promising practice when it comes to achieving permanency for children.

Source: Kirk & Griffith, 2006; USDHHS, 2007

es, and fewer days in out-of-home care than children whose cases were handled in District Court.

They also concluded that Family Courts performed better than traditional District Courts on most court functions. For example, they found the Family Courts they studied generally “required fewer judges per child case, more rapidly connected families with court resources, utilized fewer court days per completed hearing by limiting the number of continuances granted, and achieved case milestones more rapidly than the comparison District Courts” (National Child Welfare Resource Center on Legal and Judicial Issues, 2007).

This certainly fits with the experience of Halifax County. According to Judge McCoy, the average time it takes a domestic case to move from filing to disposition in the 11 Family Court districts in North Carolina is 113 days. State-wide, in the non-Family Court districts, the average is 313 days. In Judge McCoy’s district the average is 59.5 days. (Note: this is for domestic cases—usually timeframes for abuse, neglect, and dependency cases are longer.)

Carolyn Poythress, Program Administrator for Child Welfare Services at Halifax County DSS, believes Family Courts have helped her agency achieve more timely and successful outcomes for children. She says that together Family Court and the Multiple Response System (North Carolina’s child welfare reform effort) are redefining the way we engage families and children and raising awareness about families’ needs.

Poythress points out that most of the time, even before it gets to Family Court, DSS has already “helped the family understand that we are not out to get them and if we get to court, it is because we had no other option. The families’ being able to see us as advocates from the beginning is making what we do more successful.”

To learn more about Family Courts in North Carolina, visit <[www.nccourts.org](http://www.nccourts.org)>. ♦

# THE ART OF TESTIFYING IN COURT

by Jamie Hamlett, JD, Attorney for the Alamance County Department of Social Services

Testifying in court is an art, one that can only be mastered through practice and experience. The next time you are called upon to take the stand, remember that as a witness you are the artist. The audience—in particular the judge—is your canvas. Your paintbrushes are the words you choose and your paints are the facts you have to relate. Although you must never change the facts, the way you apply them to the canvas can make all the difference.

This article is for those of you who, as part of your work in child welfare, must occasionally take the stand and paint a picture for the judge.

## FOLLOW THE BASIC RULES

As social workers, you are expected to be competent and professional. Judges look to you as the experts in the area of child welfare. To live up to that expectation you need to know how to testify in court, which means following what I call the four basic rules:

**1. Always tell the truth, even if it hurts.** If you don't, it is sure to come back on you in some way. When you get caught in a lie, even a "small" lie, it forever hurts your credibility in the eyes of that judge. A lie will not only impact your credibility in the case at hand but in every case for which you testify from that point forward.

**2. Don't be afraid to admit you didn't hear or understand a question.** Most lawyers love the sound of their own voice, so chances are they won't mind repeating what they have said.

**3. Stop talking when someone says, "Objection."** The judge will tell you whether to answer the question.

**4. Don't forget:** always tell the truth.

## MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION

Remember your mother telling you that you can never take back your first impression? This is especially true for the professional testifying in the courtroom. Therefore, your first impression must be strong and positive.

**Dress appropriately.** Wear professional, conservative attire. Your demeanor during court proceedings should be equally professional.

**Behave properly.** While you are waiting for your case to be called, be attentive, quiet, and respectful. The judge is observing more than just the parties at hand. This is particularly true if you have a presiding judge who is a stickler for certain issues. For example, if the judge does not like drinks or food in the courtroom, do not be the person who gets called out for having drinks and food in the court. You run the risk of making the judge angry at you before you even start, and you set a poor example

for others who have less exposure to the court system.

**Body language is key.** Stand and sit tall in the courtroom. Your body language can exude confidence or weakness. When people are teaching self-defense classes, it is often taught that muggers profile their victims. A person walking slouched over with his eyes cast to the ground is more likely to be prey than someone who is aware of his surroundings and walking upright. Let your body language signal to the opposing party that you are not going to be the next victim.

**Speak to the court with respect.** Even if you do not respect the judge on a given day, give the court the respect it deserves. The court is the best system we have for resolving controversies and administering justice in this country. The ideal and principles that stand behind the courtroom are to be admired and respected by all.

## PREPARE FOR COURT

In Alamance County, I have the luxury of being the in-house attorney. That means I can often meet with workers prior to court to help them organize, predict, and prepare. Yet because in-house attorneys are fairly rare, I'd like to give you a few tips for preparing yourself prior to a court appearance.

**Do good work.** Although you may think your initial presentation to the courtroom is your first opportunity to impress the court, the truth is that you begin preparing your testimony the moment you begin working with a family. The best method for having good testimony is to follow best practices in your work. In addition to doing the right thing, you will feel more confident and secure knowing that your underlying work is thorough and can withstand the scrutiny of the opposing party.

**Review and make notes.** Prior to court, review your records. When social workers come to my office, I hand them large note cards on which to make the notes they will use during testimony. Reviewing the file and taking notes helps them internalize information and keep it fresh. When they are on the witness stand, the note cards are easier to use than large pieces of bulky paper. The truth is, once workers have put all that effort into preparing, they rarely have to refer to notes.

When a worker does not review the file prior to court, the testimony often comes across as sloppy, unorganized, and less credible. Put yourself in the judge's position: every time a question is asked, the social



Jamie Hamlett

worker must take long pauses to flip through voluminous records. At some point, you will begin to think that this case is not important to the worker. Although a witness should feel free to think and take time when answering questions, taking long pauses can cause frustration for those waiting. Be prepared. Know your case.

**Practice.** Practicing your testimony is key. Sit in front of a mirror or get a peer to help you go through some practice questions. When you are practicing, identify areas of weakness in your case. This will give you an opportunity to think through those weaknesses and develop an appropriate response.

When you are reviewing a case and discover a huge flaw, bring that to the attention of your attorney immediately. Often it is better for your attorney to intentionally bring out a weakness than to have it brought out by the opposing attorney during cross-examination. This can also add to your credibility.

## IN THE COURTROOM

Now you are on the witness stand. What should you do?

**Tell the truth.** (I may have said that already.)

**Stick to the facts.** The court wants facts. Do not share your opinions unless asked to do so. The facts should not be clouded by your emotion or feelings. If you do give an opinion you should be able to back it up with facts.

**Do not be afraid to say you don't know** or do not remember when asked a question. On one occasion, a social worker was asked what happened in court. Unfortunately, she could not remember. Rather than admit this, she proceeded to talk about what she thought happened, which led her to talk about what she thought the judge was thinking. At that point I was forced to object to my own witness! However, the judge was so amused he encouraged her to continue. It was not a good moment.

**Avoid jargon and acronyms.** Assume your audience knows nothing. If you do use social work lingo, explain what it means so everyone will be educated and understand. This is also significant when you consider that the case could be reviewed by another court on appeal. When you explain a term in court your explanation enters the record of the proceedings; this ensures the appeals court will understand what you are talking about.

**Do not fear cross-examination.** If you have taken all the steps above to prepare, you are prepared for cross-examination. During cross-examination you must keep your composure and professional demeanor.

**Don't take things personally.** During one highly

## OUR ADVERSARIAL SYSTEM

The U.S. has decided that by presenting strongly opposing points of view in a courtroom setting, the truth is likely to emerge. This is the basis of the legal system.



Lawyers are required by their own code of ethics to “zealously represent their client’s wishes and interests.” By this code, a lawyer cannot do what she believes to be best if that differs from what her client thinks is best.

This philosophical and ethical foundation puts the opposing counsel’s behavior in a different light. When a social worker asks, “How can this lawyer defend these parents when this family situation is so harmful to this child?” the answer is simple: it’s the lawyer’s job. If she did not question every decision the social worker made, every interviewing technique, and every personal bias, Johnny’s parents would be getting less than what every citizen of the United States is entitled to—a competent and zealous defense.

contentious case, a foster parent was being cross-examined by the relatives’ attorney. The foster mother became very angry because she was being criticized for her treatment of a family member. The foster mother lashed out at the attorney, judge, and family member.

From that point on, she had no credibility with the judge. When she was explaining to the judge the difficulty the children were having with visitation with the relatives, the judge’s eyes glazed over.

**Take heart.** No one is comfortable on the witness stand. However, you should never feel alone on the witness stand. Your attorney is your ally. He or she will help jog your memory when you get lost and try to guide you back when you go astray. You are not alone.

Remember, every time you testify you are crafting your art so that you will be better the next time. You will mature and improve with time. You will learn what to expect and how to handle situations. Do not be afraid to self-critique after you testify or ask someone where you did well and what areas could use improvement. Believe it or not, attorneys do this as well.

## CONCLUSION

You are now prepared to go into the world of testimony. Remember to paint your picture for those who have never seen it before. When you get off the witness stand, your audience should be able to envision what you yourself have lived! ♦

### 3 KEY RESOURCES FOR DECREASING DELINQUENT BEHAVIORS

When the children and youth they serve are involved with the juvenile justice system, child welfare professionals sometimes find it difficult to decrease the reoccurrence of delinquent behaviors. Here are three key services in North Carolina that may help.

**Key Therapeutic Foster Care.** The Guide to Community Preventive Services conducted a systematic review of five studies assessing therapeutic foster care. Based on the evidence, therapeutic foster care was found to reduce violent crime by chronically delinquent adolescents almost 70%. Therapeutic foster care programs also provide a significant cost savings for the juvenile justice system.

Currently there are 82 private child-placing agencies licensed by the NC Division of Social Services. Most of these agencies provide therapeutic foster care. For a listing go to <[www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/licensing/docs/cpalistfostercare.pdf](http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/licensing/docs/cpalistfostercare.pdf)>.

**Key Multisystemic Therapy (MST).** This is a fairly new, evidenced-based service provided in North Carolina that has demonstrated effectiveness. Funded by Medicaid, MST is an intensive, short-term (3-4 months) home and family

focused treatment approach for delinquent youth. MST intervenes directly in the youth's family (or foster family), peer group, school, and neighborhood by identifying and targeting factors that contribute to the youth's problem behavior.

To learn more about MST or to find a list of agencies in North Carolina licensed to offer it, go to <[www.mstservices.com/text/licensed\\_agencies.htm](http://www.mstservices.com/text/licensed_agencies.htm)>.

**Key MAJORS.** The program Managing Access for Juvenile Offender Resources and Services (MAJORS) ensures that no child falls through the cracks and that a system is in place to identify and track all substance-abusing, adjudicated youth in counties where the MAJORS program exists. Youth qualify for the program if they are under 18, adjudicated delinquent, on probation or under the active supervision of a juvenile court counselor, and there is evidence of a potential substance abuse problem.

According to the MAJORS website, this program is active in 56 of North Carolina's 100 counties. To learn more about MAJORS go to <[www.ncmajors.org/](http://www.ncmajors.org/)>. ♦



### IN THIS ISSUE: CHILD WELFARE AND JUVENILE JUSTICE IN NORTH CAROLINA

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