



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

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W.Va. making progress as National Adoption Day approaches

For immediate release Wednesday, November 20, 2013

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – As National Adoption Day nears, West Virginia is making progress in finding adoptive homes for children in out-of-home care who are victims of child abuse and neglect, according to newly released state performance measures.

Adoption advocates, policymakers, volunteers, and families will celebrate National Adoption Day on Saturday, Nov. 23, at Valley Worlds of Fun in Fairmont (www.valleyworldsoffun.com).

Registration begins at 10:45 a.m. and lunch at 11:30 a.m., with a presentation at noon. The rest of the day is open for fun.

The amount of time it took to find a permanent placement for a child after an original petition was filed went from 602 days in 2008 to 475.2 days in 2012, the most recent year for which data is available. That's according to a report published this month by the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals based on data from the West Virginia Child Abuse and Neglect Database.

(<http://www.courtsvw.gov/court-administration/CIP/pdfs/statewide-trends-2008-2012.pdf>.)

The time it took to terminate parental rights after an original petition is filed dropped from 103.7 days to 76.1 days between 2008 and 2012.

The child abuse and neglect database also shows positive trends in time to adjudication and disposition in child abuse and neglect cases.

Although more than 1,000 children eligible for adoption remain in foster care in West Virginia, the number of foster children being adopted is increasing, from 523 in FY2008 to 632 in FY2012 (http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/children_adopted.pdf).

“West Virginia social workers are diligent in their case work and in completing a finalized adoption for the children on their case load,” said Twenty-Eighth Judicial Circuit (Nicholas County) Judge Gary Johnson, Chairman of the Court Improvement Program. “Combined with our judges’ leadership and the efforts of multidisciplinary treatment teams, we are improving at moving children to timely permanency.”

“The Supreme Court of Appeals looks forward to continued collaboration with other branches of government to enhance the child protection system and find permanent

homes for the more than 1,000 children waiting to be adopted in the state,” said Chief Justice Brent D. Benjamin.

The Supreme Court’s Division of Court Services oversees the Child Abuse and Neglect Database. Division Director Angela Saunders and Deputy Director Autumn Johnson spoke at a recent Children’s Justice Task Force conference and led discussions on the impact case professionals have on reaching benchmarks in child abuse and neglect cases in a timely manner. They have made similar presentations at other Supreme Court and Prosecuting Attorney Institute conferences.

The Supreme Court’s Court Improvement Program has several initiatives to improve the plight of children and families in the child abuse/neglect and juvenile justice systems, including the New View Project, which focuses on finding permanency options for children lingering in out-of-home care. Supreme Court and DHHR administrators worked together to launch the New View project in April. A panel from the Court Improvement Program spoke about the project at the DHHR Timeliness to Permanency conference on November 8.

More information about the Court Improvement Program is available at www.wvcip.com.

Anyone interested in becoming a foster parent or adoptive parent to children in foster care may visit <http://www.wvdhhr.org/oss/adoption/>.

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