



NCJRS

AUG 1 1977

ACQUISITION



THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

CRIMINAL COURTS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT

Institute for Advanced Studies in Justice

The American University Law School

Washington, D.C.

A Program of the
Office of Regional Operations
(Adjudication Division)
Law Enforcement Assistance Administration
U.S. Department of Justice

42607



CRIMINAL COURTS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT

Joseph A. Trotter, Jr., Director
Caroline S. Cooper, Deputy Director
R. William Linden, Jr., Technical Assistance Specialist
Kathy Bradt, Administrative/Research Assistant
Susan Ellis, Secretary

Project Advisory Board

Nicholas N. Kittrie, Law School
Richard A. Myren, Center for the Administration of Justice
David J. Saari, Center for the Administration of Justice
Elliott S. Milstein, Law School

INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES IN JUSTICE

Nicholas N. Kittrie, Institute Director
Joseph A. Trotter, Jr., Associate Director
David J. Saari, Associate Director
B.J. Tennery, Associate Director (On Leave)
Fran Lazerow, Assistant Director for Research

David E. Aaronson & C. Thomas Dienes, Co-principal Investigators
The Impact of Decriminalization on the Intake Process for Public Inebriates

H.H.A. Cooper, Staff Director
National Advisory Committee Task Force on Disorders and Terrorism

Jerry V. Wilson, Project Director
War on Crime in the District of Columbia 1955-1975

Michael Rudolph, Project Director
Assessment on the Critical Issues in Adult Probation Services

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

Joseph J. Sisco, President
Richard Berendzen, Provost
Gordon A. Christenson, Dean, Law School

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
RELATING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A
FAMILY DIVISION IN THE
PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND
CIRCUIT COURT

May 1977

Consultants:

H. Ted Rubin
John M. Bischoff

CRIMINAL COURTS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT
The American University Law Institute
4900 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20016
(202) 686-3803

This report was prepared in conjunction with The American University Law School Criminal Courts Technical Assistance Project, under a contract with the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Organizations undertaking such projects under Federal Government sponsorship are encouraged to express their own judgment freely. Therefore, points of view or opinions stated in this report do not necessarily represent the official position of the Department of Justice. The American University is solely responsible for the factual accuracy of all material presented in this publication.

The Law Enforcement Assistance Administration reserves the right to reproduce, publish, translate, or otherwise use, and to authorize others to publish and use all or any part of the copyrighted material contained in this publication.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. COMMENTARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS	4
A. Jurisdiction	4
1. Present Provisions	4
2. Recommendations	6
B. Development of a Cross-Indexing System	7
1. Present Provisions	7
2. Recommendations	8
a. General	8
b. Clerical issues	10
C. Judicial Hearing Officer Continuity	11
1. Present Provisions	11
2. Recommendations	11
D. Intake Function	12
1. Present Provisions	12
2. Recommendations	13
E. Integrated Social Service Delivery	14
1. Present Provisions	14
2. Recommendations	15
F. Future Role of Court Masters	16
G. Methods for Evaluating the Project	17
H. Other Issues	18
1. Duties of the Family Court Administrator	18
2. Administrative/Planning Matters	19
III. APPENDIX	

I. INTRODUCTION

The judiciary and the state legislature of the State of Maryland have expressed substantial interest in developing the family court concept as an approach to reducing judicial system fragmentation of families and to improve the coordination of social service delivery to court-related families. On March 30, 1977 a pilot family court project was initiated in Prince George's County with the view that this demonstration could serve as a prototype for other courts in the state in the implementation of any additional family divisions in the future. Approval of a grant application approximating \$80,000 was secured from the Governor's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice for this pilot project. These monies, together with the state and local match, enabled the court to hire a family division administrator and to develop a cross-index identification system for all family-related cases, as well as miscellaneous expenses.

In planning the implementation of this pilot project the Prince George's County Circuit Court Administrator, Mr. Albert H. Szal, requested technical assistance from LEAA's Criminal Courts Technical Assistance Project at The American University Law Institute to address three primary areas:

- Intra-court, inter-court and inter-agency coordination issues
- Development of this cross-indexing records system
- Recommendations relating to the role and duties of the family court administrator

The consultants selected for this assignment were H. Ted Rubin (Team Leader), former juvenile court judge in Denver, Colorado and presently Assistant Executive Director of the Institute for Court Management, and John M. Bischoff, Director of the Family Division of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

Consultant Bischoff provided on-site services March 14-16. Consultant Rubin provided on-site services March 15-16, 1977. Consultant Bischoff's primary responsibility was to develop initial guides for a cross-indexing system. During the site visit he examined present court record systems in the clerks' offices of the circuit and district courts. He conducted interviews with Albert H. Szal, circuit court administrator, and with the following persons: Louise Burroughs, deputy clerk, juvenile section; Linda Catterton, supervising clerk, domestic relations section; Dorothy Kirby, deputy clerk, equity section; Norman Pritchard, clerk, circuit court; Shirley Cross, chief deputy clerk, circuit court; Judge James Taylor, as well as with juvenile and domestic relations masters.

Consultant Rubin interviewed Mr. Szal; Raymond McCane, Regional Supervisor, and James Deedes, County Supervisor, Maryland Department of Juvenile Services; Carol Berry, Circuit Court Mental Hygiene Unit; and Circuit Administrative Judge Ernest A. Loveless, Jr. He observed hearings conducted by masters in juvenile and domestic relations causes.

Both consultants attended an evening dinner meeting attended by Judges Loveless, Taylor, Woods, Blackwell, and Mason (the latter is a district judge, cross-filed as a circuit judge, who will be able to hear family-related cases in the circuit court), three representatives of the state's attorney, and several key clerks. The consultants also participated in a luncheon meeting of an interagency coordinating group, earlier organized to facilitate coordination for the juvenile court division, and now to perform this function with the developing family court division. Attending were Judges Taylor and Mason, masters of the court, chief clerks of the circuit and district courts and their unit heads, the regional and county supervisors of the Department of Juvenile Services, the

Department of Social Services' liaison, two police officials, a school representative, and other county representatives.

In addition to the site meetings, the consultants examined pertinent statutes and rules, court reports and relevant data.

II. COMMENTARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The framework of this analysis is structured about the following four criteria for family court divisions developed by consultant Rubin as reporter for the volume on Court Organization and Administration, Institute of Judicial Administration - American Bar Association Joint Commission on Juvenile Justice:

(1) The consolidation of the primary subject matter jurisdictions of family-related legal causes.

(2) The continuity of judicial hearing officer for all family members as they appear in court in connection with a wide variety of family-related legal causes.

(3) The expansion of the juvenile court intake approach to additional family division matters.

(4) A more integrated delivery of social services by fewer social service agents.

A. Jurisdiction

1. Present Provisions

The jurisdiction of the division when it began on March 30, 1977 included two rudiments: juvenile causes and domestic relations causes. These subject matters will comprise the major workload of the division. For example, in 1976 delinquency (4,064), child in need of supervision (288), and child in need of assistance (512) cases accounted for 4,868 case dispositions and involved 8,592 hearings. Divorce, combined with support, paternity and the Uniform Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act may involve between 5,000 and 6,000 cases per year. Furthermore, a substantial number of these cases may involve recurrent hearings. For instance, an alleged delinquent youth may

require a detention hearing, an adjudicatory hearing, and a dispositional hearing. If a youth reoffends, additional hearings are required. Divorce matters may require a temporary support hearing or other temporary orders and recurrent litigation concerned with modifying support orders and visitation rights. Civil support hearings, not growing out of divorce actions frequently require recurrent hearings concerning non-payment.

Additionally, and somewhat uniquely, the division plans to integrate intra-family misdemeanor offenses and criminal non-support offenses which fall within the jurisdiction of the district court. It is planned that these cases will be filed by information in the circuit court where they will be heard by Circuit Judge Mason and by Judges Taylor and Woods, who have cross-filed as district judges. It is an ambitious plan to incorporate into the division those matters presently heard in the district court, since the problems of coordination in the new division will be severe even without them. Conceptually, however, they fall within the subject matter purview of the division, and the court has secured a statement from the state's attorney to the effect that these informations will, in the future, be filed in the circuit court.

It has not been determined whether murder and other severe felonies within a family will be handled in this division. There is agreement among the judges, however, that certain additional jurisdiction, normally included within the family court construct, should remain outside its purview at this time. These include adoption, contested adoptions (as where a former husband contests the adoption of his children by his former wife's new husband), and the voluntary relinquishment of children for the purpose of adoption. Such matters have been heard exclusively by Judge Loveless for years and it is felt that few families involved in these proceedings will have other legal causes arising within the family division.

"Emergency procedures", known elsewhere as civil mental illness commitment procedures, are, theoretically, includable within a broad jurisdictional definition of a family division. These matters, at present, are heard in the district court. Little consideration has been given to their inclusion in the division, although the statute permits their adjudication in either circuit or district court.

2. Recommendations

Had the consultancy occurred six months earlier, a recommendation would have been made to defer the incorporation into the division of intra-family criminal offenses and criminal non-support. Probably, these matters could have been better absorbed six or twelve months after the initiation of the division, following a shake down of the problems inherent in reorganization. Since these jurisdictional grounds are a part of the family division, the court had already taken some positive steps to assure their orderly incorporation, namely, the cross-filing of judges, discussions with the state's attorney, preliminary negotiations with the family service agency, and the approved grant proposal for a family court administrator and staff.

Absorption of the emergency procedures jurisdiction should be deferred, but during the course of the next year division judges and personnel should become better informed about the administration of these procedures. An evaluation should be made as to the number of persons, or their family members, involved in both emergency procedures and in family division cases. The establishment of some centralized intake unit in the family division during its first year of operation could be expanded to help in the screening of emergency procedure cases, if that jurisdiction is added.

No recommendation is made to place the adoption, contested adoption, and relinquishment jurisdiction into the division at this time.

B. Development of a Cross-Indexing System

1. Present Provisions

The current indexing system used in the equity section for domestic relations cases and in the juvenile section for juvenile cases have as their basic purpose the identification of cases by names of the parties for the case number tie-in. In the juvenile section, the index card goes further and actually reflects a case summary with related cases attached on separate cards, thereby providing a cross reference capability in relation to juvenile cases. Since intra-family misdemeanors will be referred from the district court clerk's office, a family division file will have to be prepared, and the original papers returned to the District court, no indexing for these cases is yet in existence.

A real need is evident for additional information not readily available in the present system. Turning to the recently initiated form PGC #1672 2/77 Initial Report (attached), it is necessary to determine the sufficiency of its data elements and the reliability of the sources. The key aspect of this form is in the second portion, and it appears to provide the necessary cross indexing information. The problem is with the reliability of the source. In the equity section these forms are presented to the attorneys filing their cases since they are in the best position to provide this initial information. Unfortunately, there is no way to require that the information be shared at this level. Moreover, it appears that in many instances the attorney does not have occasion to know this background himself or if he does, not to a reliable degree of accuracy.

In the juvenile section no such opportunity exists for obtaining such data since the bare petitions are routinely forwarded from the state attorney's office. Without more, the use of this form in that section adds nothing to the existing index previously described. There is, however, a capability for obtaining the needed information in the juvenile area, but not in the clerk's

office. It should be possible to obtain a rather detailed family history from the intake process which could follow the petition into the clerk's office. This information would then validate the use of the initial report form in this sector. A similar source could be created for intra-family misdemeanor cases.

Regarding the problem of ascertaining a single or limited data element common to all family cases upon which valid identification can be made, it is fairly safe to conclude that there are none currently in the system. This is to say that there appears to be no practical way to make such an assessment within the system without additional information. A cross check of names on existing indexes would prove laborious and unfruitful. As already observed, names alone cannot be relied upon. To add in the home address as an element, while readily available on the juvenile index, would require a second step of perusing the domestic relations pleadings. This approach would be one of rather overwhelming proportions and must be dismissed.

2. Recommendations

a. General

The most basic problem to be addressed in the initiation of the proposed cross-indexing system is the establishment of a single or limited data element upon which to make identification across case jurisdictional boundaries with a high degree of validity. Names alone are of limited value in such a process. In establishing such an element, a number of factors must be considered. First of all, the difficulty or ease with which necessary information can be obtained and at what point or at which process stages in the system must be determined.

Secondly, intra-court coordination problems must be studied in view of the fact that the current court structure will remain substantially unchanged within the pilot project proposed by the court administrator. Which is to say that,

for the present, differences will occur only in the direction of intra-agency or intra-court interfaces of activities as opposed to changes in structure and hierarchical relationships. Since this is unavoidable at present and perhaps for some period of time to come, it is believed that this will hinder the development of some aspects of the cross indexing system. On the positive side, however, this hinderance is not insurmountable, and through readjustments of collaborative efforts, can become secondary to other more basic road blocks for which solutions can, at best, be characterized as illusive.

A third factor in need of consideration is when or at what stage in the system the complete litigious history of the family is necessary. While the basic concept of the new family division contemplates a family unit approach to the determination of litigation regarding individual members, certain practical considerations must be considered. The energy and resources which must be expended to cross index these matters at an early stage need to be weighed against the real use value in the latter stages of case determination. It is, therefore, important to make a value decision between "nice to know" and a "need to know". It is submitted that, in a manual system, an actual "need to know" should be the basis for the operation with a frequency of use which would justify the endeavor. At such time as computerization might be a realized fact, then the "nice to know" concerns can be easily accommodated. Regarding the "need to know" within a manual system, and considering all other constraints previously mentioned, it is suggested that the prime station in the system at which the most accurate information is obtainable with the least effort is at any court hearing. This is to say that if the need, satisfied at a point this late in the process, is as useful in the ultimate determination as it would be had it been satisfied earlier, then serious consideration should be given to this approach, at least at present.

b. Clerical issues

With regard to the clerical mechanics of creating such an index, the following recommendations are made with no particular order of priority:

1. A rule or administrative order be promulgated requiring that information regarding prior actions be supplied as a condition precedent to filing a domestic relations case.

There is a precedent for this in the Maryland statutes which requires certain detailed information to be supplied upon the filing of decrees to satisfy National Divorce Registration requirements. Moreover, this would give the clerk's office a control which is now absent, currently placing it in an untenable situation of having to provide information it has no access to.

2. Efforts should be made to obtain the required information as part of original intake procedures in juvenile cases.

The dearth of information now available to the clerk's office relating to litigation outside of the juvenile operation is evident.

3. Efforts should be made to obtain the necessary information concerning intra-family criminal cases in the district court at the initial interview level.

Since this is an entirely new concept, it would appear that more difficulty may be anticipated in this category.

4. The proposed concept for consultant services to create a system for cross-indexing should be expedited so as to avoid duplication of efforts in the creation of the manual system.

This anticipates that the systems ultimately devised will be within a data processing application.

5. The court should move as quickly as possible toward utilization of a mini-computer housed in and controlled by the court.

While this approach is an absolute necessity to the related case indexing function, there are several other areas in the system which can be greatly enhanced with such a capability. It is important to establish such a system in the court, and under its exclusive control. Experience with shared systems has proven time and again that the court's needs and priorities can seldom be met within those arrangements. Cooperative agreements, no matter how strong, usually fail at the time of greatest need.

C. Judicial Hearing Officer Continuity

1. Present Provisions

This concept may be paraphrased as "one family - one judge". To date, the court has used a basic master calendaring system. Different judges or masters may hear different stages of a case involving a family member. The calendar structure has not been organized so that an individual party is heard at all times by one master or by one judge. Ideally, with reorganization, this individual would be heard at all stages of all family division proceedings by this same master or judge, and, furthermore, all other members of his family involved in various proceedings in this division would be heard by this same master or judge. Such judicial officer hearing continuity cannot be effectuated without a new approach to a case information/indexing system.

2. Recommendations

The court should be aware that the one family - one judge concept, desirable as it may sound, has certain problems attached to it. One is that a judge may be so familiar with a family that his knowledge of its problems may lead to prejudgment. It is difficult to totally objectify a delinquent charge against a boy whose family is, for example, known to a judge for several intra-family offenses (i.e., child in need of assistance petitions involving two younger sisters, another brother's prior delinquency, and an older sister's non-support petition.) Recusal on the motion of the judge or the client should be granted readily.

Further, there must be an awareness that intense involvement with families will take its toll on the judges and masters. Assignment to the family division should not be seen as permanent. All judges should be assigned to this division unless such assignment poses overwhelming difficulties to a judge which would render his tenure there ineffective. However, judges who would prefer not to receive this assignment should nonetheless be assigned.

It is important that all judges share in the "ownership" of the division. It should not be seen as judge X's court because he is so identified with it that he will be unhappy anywhere else. Assignment should be for at least one year, renewable, but should not exceed three years without reassignment to the general court. There is a tendency in the social courts to become so involved with social and psychological issues that legal requirements become secondary. Accordingly, generalist judges are seen as more valuable, and judges assigned to specialist duties for one up to three years could render excellent contribution to the family division.

D. Intake Function

1. Present Provisions

Juvenile intake is performed by the Department of Juvenile Services. There is no social service intake in divorce, support or other adult cases. Any intake review of intra-family and criminal non-support offenses is the responsibility of the state's attorney and, at best, is limited to legal screening.

There is one present procedure that reflects a degree of interagency collaboration. The Department of Social Services transmits petitions it wishes to file in child in need of assistance cases to the Department of Juvenile Services which performs a limited review function prior to filing a petition. It is possible at this juncture for these two agencies to learn

whether a family is known to both agencies. It is important to note that the family services agency (United Way) has expressed strong interest in providing at least a part-time social worker to assist the division.

The court's mental hygiene unit does not participate in any intake process other than furnishing certain jail evaluations of persons involved in emergency procedures.

2. Recommendations

There are different approaches to expanding intake service, but first, it should be kept in mind that not all parties to family division proceeding need to be "changed"; that not all wish to be changed; and that we have neither the resources nor the skills to effectively change all those who need to be changed or seek to be changed.

In part, this involves the distinction between "people processing" and "people changing". We should continue to process many people. We should seek to effectuate constructive change in more people. Whom we would change is unknown at this time. One place to start is with the intrafamily offense where intake screening approaches and short term crisis counseling services could do some good. Another is to interview paternity/support parties, aimed at reaching agreements which would obviate extensive court hearings.

The pending relocation of the division to the first floor of the courthouse, plus the basic reorganization and certain other factors, afford the basis for an expanded and centralized intake service. The Department of Juvenile Services, the Department of Social Services, the family service agency, and possibly other community agencies and citizen volunteers could combine efforts into a coordinated approach to the intake screening of certain groupings and subgroupings of cases.

Further staffing for such a unit might be possible following an evaluation and possible reorganization of the court's mental hygiene unit. cursory assessment by consultant Rubin suggested that unit personnel might

be more effectively utilized by the court, and that greater court oversight might be in order. Possibly, a different staffing pattern and changed functions might be considered, with certain time and staff allocated, in part, to the expanded intake unit. Some psychological evaluations might be conducted concerning cases at the intake point, although a six to eight week turnaround time, as presently required from the point of referral to receipt of the unit's report, would be disadvantageous. The recasting of these positions/expenditures, with or without additional funds, could strengthen intake and short term counseling services, although careful assessment should be given to whether a reallocation would hamper presently delivered services. Conceivably, a new approach to how these monies are expended could result in allocation of a full-time qualified director for the intake unit. This coordinating position could then provide leadership if expansion to better-coordinated social service delivery is effected.

E. Integrated Social Service Delivery

1. Present provisions

Agencies working with court clients sometimes share information when it is known that another agency is involved. Probably, on an informal basis, two workers from two agencies agree to a division of labor in such a case. It is unknown whether individual workers from two or more agencies ever agree that one worker will carry primary responsibility for a family, with the other(s) to perform specifically agreed upon functions or to remain inactive. Probably, the involved agencies have not developed such a primary responsibility strategy at the policy level.

There is a rather close relationship between the court and the adult probation and parole department which, presently, collects support payments and advises the court of deficiencies in collections. Currently, there is no agreement between the juvenile and adult probation services to coordinate

or share service delivery when different members of the same family are known to the two agencies.

A caveat to this latter concept was mentioned by Juvenile Services' personnel who pointed out difficulties if, for example, they were to work with a juvenile and his father when both are on probation. Juvenile Services has no legal responsibility for the father and could not bring the father into court on a probation violation. Nonetheless, this would not seem to prohibit such an approach. One worker could work with both family members, but a probation violation by the father could be brought to court by the adult worker carrying the legal responsibility.

Other services now provided the court can receive improved overall coordination. The Department of Juvenile Services annually conducts more than 40 custody investigations and more than 100 adoption investigations. The mental hygiene unit also performs custody investigations. The Department of Social Services assists as well.

As many as six or eight agencies might be involved with a given family, a development which is often characterized by problems of interagency coordination, duplicative services, confused communication, turf problems, wasted time, client dehumanization, and caseload counts which become meaningless.

2. Recommendations

The court, through its ongoing family (juvenile) interagency coordinating council, has an excellent nucleus for considering the range of problems which will accompany the family division process. This council will need to be expanded to include certain additional agencies such as mental health services, adult probation, and the family service agency. It is recommended that one or several workshops of the expanded group consider such issues as: -- how can we serve families better? -- How can we serve whole families better? -- How can we coordinate our services better? -- How can we reduce agency service duplication? -- How can we help effectuate a family court division?

Growing out of such efforts, the court and the agencies should develop strategies to achieve these objectives. New personnel, who could play important roles in the ongoing interagency effort will be the family court administrator and, the coordinator of the intake unit, if that position is created.

It will be important to expand on present efforts to involve the state's attorney, public defender, and other relevant agency personnel as this project moves forward. Interpretation to the public and to the funding bodies will also be necessary.

F. Future Role of Court Masters

The current proposal to replace all masters with judges should not automatically preclude exploration of the need to continue the current usage in cases other than juvenile matters. The trend in most jurisdictions is toward, rather than away from, the master concept for volume, non-critical caseloads.

There is, at present, a basic consensus in Maryland that masters should be phased out over perhaps a five-year period. Such a sentiment, likely to be implemented, poses an important decision to the court at the outset of the family division. Should the masters, or some of the masters, function as quasi-judges, responsible for all stages of division hearings involving all members of a family (one family - one master), or should a "weak master" role be delineated whereby only judges undertake overall responsibilities for the basic family unit and the masters handle certain preliminary, relatively routine, lower priority hearings, and other miscellaneous matters?

A weak master's role might include:

-- Juvenile matters: Detention/shelter hearings; 30-day review of detention/shelter hearings; initial arraignments and entry of plea.

-- Divorce: Temporary restraining orders; temporary support orders; dissolution decree; support and visitation determination; limited amount property settlement disputes; continuing controversies regarding modification or enforcement of orders.

-- Paternity: If non-contested, entry of admission and determination of support amount.

-- Uniform Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act: All matters.

-- Criminal non-support: Entry of guilty plea; determination of support amount.

Judges far more familiar with Maryland court proceedings than the consultants may improve upon this delineation if they choose to follow a weak master approach.

The definition of the master function is very important in this court at this time due to the complex task of developing a scheduling scheme for the division, to the general deemphasis on masters, and the possibility of additional judgeships for this court. It is difficult to make a recommendation in this regard although it should be noted that consultant Rubin is opposed to any use of masters in juvenile proceedings and was able to obtain the concurrence of the IJA-ABA Joint Commission in promulgating a standard totally opposing the use of masters.

G. Methods for Evaluating the Project

Evaluation of pilot family divisions has received little consideration anywhere. Measures of the extent to which a one family - one judge system is implemented can be developed, as can measures showing the expanded use of community agency resources, and the reduction of the number of social service agents interacting with a given family. Measures can be developed to assess the impact of expanded screening at intake, though this can become quite complex. Caseload management measures can be designed, and probably should be, to facilitate caseload control, time frames between processing stages, and case scheduling approaches. At some future time the court might be able to answer certain general research questions regarding the extent to which families actually engage the family division (i.e., whether there are few, some, many families who, over time, appear in court under more than one family-related legal cause).

One further evaluation approach is recommended, that of an opinion survey of court clients, preferably done in a face-to-face interview within several weeks of a hearing. The interviewing could be done by volunteers from the Junior League, League of Women Voters, church groups, or other sources. The interview should seek to ascertain the client's responses to questions such as: Was I dealt with fairly? Did I have to wait too long for the hearing? Did I have to wait too long to obtain social services? Was I advised of my rights? Did the judge have the information he needed to make a reasonably sound decision in my case? Was I notified of the hearing in time to prepare adequately? Was I given sufficient opportunity to express my opinion? Did the judge listen to what I said? Did the judge seriously consider my opinions in reaching a decision?

Such an assessment could be done once, covering 100 - 200 cases, and could be replicated nine or twelve months later to provide a comparison with the initial survey. It could serve to help the court understand whether it is making progress in attaining its goals.

H. Other Issues

1. Duties of the Family Court Administrator

The following listing of this person's functions should serve as a starting point for consideration:

The family court administrator is an assistant to the circuit court administrator, responsible for the day-to-day administration of the family court division. The administrator's functions shall include:

- Assume responsibility for the development and administration of a cross-index information system, operating the system until it is completely installed, and then overseeing its implementation.
- Develop and administer a management information system.
- Recommend procedural changes based on an analysis of management information system reports and other sources of information.
- Recommend assignment schedules for judges and masters, examine the condition of the dockets, the practices and procedures of the court, and make recommendations for their operation.

- Serve as staff for the interagency coordinating council, meetings of judges and masters, and other meetings called by the court to facilitate the work of the family court division.
- Supervise the administrative assistant, secretary, and other employees of the division.
- Convene and coordinate working conferences of key representatives of the clerks' offices concerned with case scheduling, caseflow procedures, and records.
- Develop forms for the use of the family court division.
- Evaluate and improve the coordination of court functions with justice system agency and community agency functions.
- In conjunction with the trial court administrator, make recommendations to assist in the procurement of equipment, supplies and facilities.
- Recommend job descriptions and classifications for employees of the division, as well as salary scales, recruitment procedures, promotion procedures, and personnel practices.
- Recommend to the trial court administrator and judges improvements in the performance of the family court division.
- Assist in the development and coordination of any support collection system to be developed by the division.
- Develop and coordinate cooperative agreements with state, county, and community agencies.
- Develop and administer grants related to the improvement of this division.
- Provide overall coordination and supervision to mental health and social services programs administered by the court or provided to the court by cooperative agreement with non-court agencies.
- Perform such other duties assigned by the court administrator or the administrative judge of the family court division.

2. Administrative/Planning Matters

Priorities of space allocation should be reviewed with county administrative offices not presently scheduled to leave the court building. Particular reference is made to the Office of the Treasurer which apparently intends to expand into space which is better suited for consolidation of the domestic relations clerical functions with the equity section. The required services of the Treasurer, which relate to the clerk's office, can be provided with a minimum of staff leaving no real basis for housing to continue in such an already overwhelmed site.

Planning should begin as soon as possible by the clerk of court and the court administrator for the eventual placement of all staff performing clerical functions under the hierarchal control of the clerk. The present arrangement can only continue to produce friction which need not be the case.

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND

FAMILY LAW DIVISION

Initial Report

(PGC #1672 2/77)

Case: _____

Case No.: _____

vs. _____

Date: _____

TYPE OF CASE

☐ JUVENILE

☐ Delinquency

☐ CINS

☐ CINA

Other _____

Juvenile's Age _____

Parents/Guardian _____

☐ DOMESTIC

☐ Divorce

☐ Custody

☐ Paternity

☐ Child Support

☐ Maintenance

Other _____

☐ DISTRICT COURT

☐ Assault

☐ Non-support

Other _____

☐ MISCELLANEOUS

☐ Criminal

☐ Adoption

☐ Name Change

Has any family member been involved in any court litigation such as Assaults/
Divorce/Juvenile Proceedings/etc. in the last twelve months?

☐ yes ☐ no

If yes, what type:

☐ JUVENILE

☐ Delinquency

☐ CINS

☐ CINA

Other _____

☐ DOMESTIC

☐ Divorce

☐ Custody

☐ Paternity

☐ Child Support

☐ Maintenance

Other _____

☐ DISTRICT COURT

☐ Assault

☐ Non-support

Other _____

☐ MISCELLANEOUS

☐ Criminal

☐ Adoption

☐ Name Change

END