



## **ALLEN SUPERIOR FAMILY RELATIONS DIVISION COURT WAITING AREA POLICY FOR THE ALLEN COUNTY COURTHOUSE**

### **I. FOUNDATION FOR CHANGE**

In 2019, the Allen Superior Court Family Relations Division at the Allen County Courthouse participated in a trauma audit with the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) in order to assess its policies and procedures and work towards becoming a more trauma informed court thus enhancing outcomes for the parties who appear in court. In May of 2021, the Allen Superior Court joined the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Implementation Sites Project. The Implementation Sites Project was developed with the goal of safely reducing of the number of children in foster care and achieving better outcomes for children in foster care by supporting and empowering judges in CHINS cases to be leaders of system reform and best practice implementation through the use of a judicially-led stakeholder collaborative. In November of 2022, the NCJFCJ conducted an assessment of the Allen Superior Court Family Relations Division's practices, policies and procedures as they relate to dependency/CHINS proceedings. The results of the assessment were received in April of 2023.

## **II. RESOURCES UTILIZED TO DRAFT COURT POLICIES**

The NCJFCJ has established the Enhanced Resource Guidelines (ERGs) and the Key Principles For Permanency Planning for Children (Key Principles) as the core resources for all Implementation Sites. After reviewing the recommendations from the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court reports that were generated from both audits/assessments, and the Enhanced Resource Guidelines and Key Principles, this Court began implementing several new policies and procedures designed to limit the amount of trauma imposed upon litigants appearing in court and to improve outcomes for those who appear in dependency/CHINS proceedings. One of the new policies has been to establish defined waiting areas for litigants who are waiting for hearings.

## **III. WAITING AREA POLICY**

Accordingly, the following Waiting Area Policy has been established by the Allen Superior Court Family Relations Division (08):

**Effective immediately, all parties to Children in Need of Services proceedings shall check-in with the Court Services Representatives in Room 208 upon arrival at the courthouse. The parties will then be assigned to a specific waiting area that will be noted in the Quest Case**

**Management System. The parties to the case, including the DCS Case Managers and Attorneys, Public Defenders, GAL/CASA, Respondent Parents, Guardians or Custodians as well as Service Providers shall remain in the assigned waiting area until the case is called by the Court. This will ensure that the whereabouts of all parties to the proceeding are known and that all persons present for the hearing are ready to participate when their case is called by the court. Additionally, when it is time for a case to be “called,” any person seeking to retrieve the parties from the waiting area shall personally approach the parties rather than using an elevated voice to call the parties’ or case names in the rotunda. This will reduce the trauma that can be caused to the families by having their name, and the fact that they are involved in dependency proceedings revealed to others who are in the rotunda. This important court policy is consistent with the recommendations from the trauma audit and the recommendations of the NCJFCJ Enhanced Resource Guidelines.**