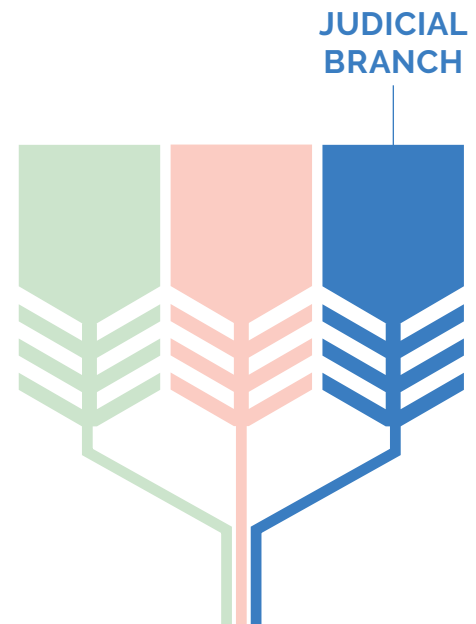


APPENDIX C: THE ROLE OF THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

The judicial branch makes critical child protection decisions, including when children should remain at home or be placed in an alternative setting, when they can safely be reunited with their family and when parents must participate in treatment plans for issues involving mental health or substance use disorder.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- ❑ **Provide insight into local service needs and practices.** Given their interactions with the children and families that appear in court before them, judges are often the team members closest to the ground. Their perspective on local service needs, practices and gaps in available services or training is especially critical to a successful three-branch approach.
- ❑ **Ensure that policy changes are coordinated and achieve their desired goal.** Judges can provide invaluable feedback to legislators and executive branch officials on how legislation or executive actions affect court processes and interactions with families as well as fiscal implications within the courts.
- ❑ **Convene and educate judicial stakeholders.** The dispersed system of judges throughout each state requires the judicial branch to cooperate with and educate members in jurisdictions throughout their state, including local model courts and multidisciplinary dependency improvement teams that may not be involved with the core or implementation team.
- ❑ **Align the three-branch initiative with ongoing judicial work.** The policy and practice changes resulting from the three-branch initiative should be embedded in educational convenings and training sessions for court administrators and judges throughout the state.



BEST PRACTICES

Engage colleagues within the branch.

- ❑ Convene and educate presiding judges, administrative judges, chief judges, court leaders, local model court teams, multidisciplinary dependency improvement teams and other judicial stakeholders.
- ❑ Involve Court Improvement Program directors, who can provide court data and resources to gather input and educate stakeholders about the initiative and potentially provide staff to support the initiative.
- ❑ Involve the judicial administration office that sets education and messaging parameters for judges.
- ❑ Recruit judicial champions for change — people who are passionate and can motivate others.



Engage with the executive branch.

- Develop a formal agreement establishing collaboration among the three branches.
- Meet face to face with executive agency staff to develop rapport.
- Engage in cross-branch training sessions.
- Build succession plans into the overall project to ensure smooth transitions when turnover occurs.
- Invite representatives to serve on or present information to judicial committees.



Engage with the legislative branch.

- Host cross-branch, topic-specific convenings that bring together legislators from relevant committees and from different parts of the state.
- Meet with legislators to educate them about frontline experiences and practices as well as policy barriers and support needed before discussing potential legislation.
- Engage legislators during the bill-drafting process to reach consensus on legislative proposals before they are introduced.
- Ensure that meetings do not conflict with important legislative hearings or committee meetings.



Prepare for transition.

- Develop a succession plan for each team member who may transition off the initiative because of rotation, term limits or other foreseeable reasons.
- Create a clear and concise document that conveys the purpose and goals of the initiative, achievements to date, ongoing work and a description of who is involved. Share it with new team members as they join the initiative.



Help scheduling meetings to ensure judicial branch participation.

- Help the team lead schedule meetings well in advance to ensure judicial branch representation.
- Request regularly scheduled meetings, with specific roles for judicial representatives.
- Encourage lunch-time meetings and allow judges to call in when unable to attend in person.