

# Court Improvement Program OVERVIEW



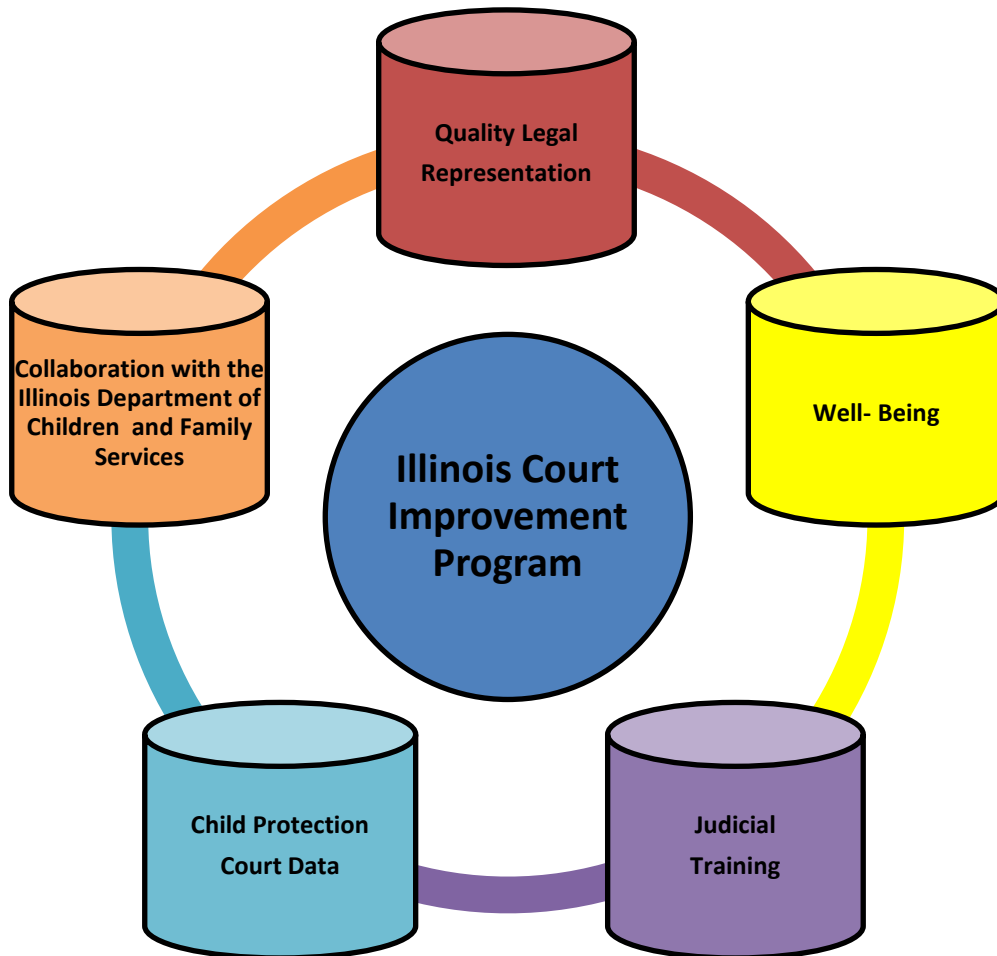
## Illinois Court Improvement Program


- The Court Improvement Program (CIP) is a federally funded grant initiative administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau.
- The CIP was initially established in 1993 as part of the Family Preservation and Support Act in response to the dramatic increase in child abuse and neglect cases and the expanded role of courts in achieving stable, permanent homes for children in foster care. Section 438 of the Social Security Act (the Act) currently authorizes funding for the highest court of each state to assess the role, responsibilities, and effectiveness of state courts in carrying out state laws guiding child welfare proceedings and to implement court improvement efforts based on those assessments.
- The purpose of CIP is to provide funding to state court systems to improve handling of abuse, neglect, foster care and adoption court cases. Legislation has since extended the CIP through Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2026.
- In FFY2000, the Supreme Court of Illinois began the administration of the Court Improvement Program through its Administrative Office, Court Services Division. In 2020, with the creation of the Courts, Children and Families Division, administration of the CIP was transferred to the new Division.
- In FFY2006, the CIP Data Collection and Analysis and Training grants were established for the purpose of developing court data systems and providing training for judges and attorneys assigned to a juvenile abuse and neglect docket. In FFY2022, the Basic, Training and Data CIP appropriations were joined under one appropriation with 30% of funding required for Data Collection & Analysis projects.
- The Courts, Children and Families Division's CIP works to implement court improvement initiatives that focus on increasing the safety, well-being, and timely permanency of children in foster care, to support engagement of families in child welfare cases, and to improve collaboration between the courts and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (IDCFS).



# The Five Pillars of the Illinois Court Improvement Program

The Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, Courts, Children and Families Division (CCFD) continues to develop the foundation and infrastructure for improved court practice in child welfare cases by concentrating its efforts on the five pillars of Illinois Court Improvement Program funding and programming. These pillars include the following: Quality Legal Representation; Judicial Training; Child Protection Court Data; Well-being; and Collaboration with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.



 **Quality Legal Representation:** Since 2010, the CCFD has focused on improving outcomes for Illinois' endangered families by enhancing the effectiveness of legal representation of children, parents, the state, and the child welfare agency in child abuse and neglect and termination of parental rights (TPR) proceedings. The Initiative includes attorney training, resource development, and funding of local programs and projects that enhance the effectiveness of legal representation.





**Judicial Training:** The CCFD is committed to developing and maintaining an effective system of training and technical assistance for judges. The priorities include the planning, design and delivery of training events which build knowledge, competencies, and skill sets, maintaining the juvenile court judge's listserv, and increasing professional networking opportunities.



**Court Protection Court Data:** Through its main data collection project, the **Child Protection Data Courts (CPDC) Project**, CIP collects and analyzes court performance measures in child abuse and neglect court cases, including achievement of permanency, time to TPR, time to first permanency hearing and time to permanent placement. CPDC sites are involved in court data collection activities and use data to enhance local practice and to inform CIP activities. CIP has additional data collection projects centered around sex trafficking of minors, dual status youth and disproportionate minority representation.



**Collaboration with the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services (IDCFS):** The CIP collaborates with the IDCFS through a required joint project, participating in the Children and Families Services Review (CFSR) and subsequent Program Improvement Plan (PIP), Title IV-E Review, implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act, and additional collaborative initiatives. IDCFS has several representatives on the Court Improvement Program Advisory Committee (CIPAC) and committees of the CCFD.



**Well-being:** Improving the court's response to issues that affect the well-being of abused and neglected children in its care is a CIP priority. Courts have a responsibility to ensure children are receiving a good education and are physically and emotionally healthy. Examples of well-being projects include issues related to youth involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, LGBTQ+ youth, trauma informed practice, substance abuse, disproportionate minority representation, and education. In addition to the Well-being Pillar, components of the well-being court performance measures are woven throughout the other pillars.

**Key Projects funded through the Illinois Court Improvement Program include but are not limited to:**

- Judge and Attorney child welfare related trainings
- Quality Hearing Project
- Dual Status Youth Initiative
- University Law Clinics
- Dedicated Guardians *ad Litem* Projects
- Child Protection Data Courts Project
- National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, *Child Abuse and Neglect Institute (CANI) Judicial Scholarships*
- Family Treatment Court Planning and/or Implementation Projects

