

## **Allen County Family Court Project**

Basic County Information for Allen County

Population: 344,006

County Seat: Fort Wayne

Number of Judicial Officers: 10 judges, 15 magistrates

Project Implementation: June 30, 2006

Allen County Project Judges: Judge Thomas Felts, Allen Circuit Court

Judge Charles Pratt, Allen Superior Court, Family Relations Division

Judge Stephen Sims, Allen Superior Court, Juvenile Division

Development Team: Tim Miller, Allen Circuit Court

Jennifer Levine, Allen Superior Court, Family Relations Division

Karlene Thompson, Allen Superior Court, Juvenile Division

Family Court Personnel: Theresa Liggett, Family Court Coordinator

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## **Family Court Mission Statement**

Through the use of technology and local Trial Rules, the Allen County Family Court Project shall develop and maintain an effective case management system to share information between courts, coordinate services for families, and ensure the provision of quality alternative dispute resolution.

## **Family Court Programming**

### **Local Rules**

An extensive review and redefining of the local rules by a comprehensive committee of local bar members was conducted. The committee updated, modified, and enhanced existing local rules and incorporated the specific Family Court Rules. With these revised rules, judicial officers accommodate the family court concept and enhance the Circuit and Superior Court's Alternative Dispute Resolution services.

### **Communication/Technology**

Allen County uses the information sharing family court model, which involves the ongoing monitoring of all of the family's litigation and the distributing of case reports to multiple courts. In addition to using Courts to research the family's litigation, Allen County uses Quest, a computerized system for sharing information between the courts. Quest modernizes case file data and benefits court staff because involved parties can view all relevant case information and prevent duplication or contradiction of orders. Through the information sharing process, the project coordinator assists with the search for necessary services and resources. She finds and works with service providers of transportation, household goods, and school supplies.

### **Collaborative Divorce / Mediation**

The Family Court Grant provided additional training for local bar on the processes to be employed for collaborative divorce. Through this program:

- Parents are encouraged to creatively produce parenting options.
- Lawyers assist families by encouraging them to use the problem solving process.
- Multi-discipline professionals are encouraged to assist in the process.
- Case management services are incorporated in the mediation process.

In addition, the grant developed the mediation and Family Group Decision Making process in pro se dissolutions and post dissolution matters.

**Paternity Facilitation Program**

Allen County is considering part time positions to explain, schedule, and coordinate the delivery of services for parents, children, and/or extended families involved in paternity cases.

**Families Served in Allen County**

Allen County began accepting families for information sharing in July 2007, with three families referred to the project. Since the acceptance of families, Allen County has served sixteen.