

## **Pasquotank/Camden Counties Memorandum of Agreement**

The parties to this MOA agree to support the following practices and policies.

### **A. Judicial Specialization.**

- 1.) Judges assigned to hear abuse, neglect and dependency cases should receive specialized training not only on the juvenile code, but in non-legal areas such as child development, substance abuse treatment and the dynamics of domestic violence and shall attend and participate in training in these areas.
- 2.) Judges assigned to hear these cases should receive certification from the Administrative Office of the Courts as a juvenile court judge.
- 3.) Judges should be assigned to juvenile court for a significant length of time, preferably at least three years.
- 4.) Effort should be made to ensure that the same judge will hear a child welfare case from start to finish.
- 5.) Judges assigned to these cases should commit to a thorough review of the child and family's situation at each hearing.

### **B. Quality Representation of Parties.**

All attorneys representing parents through court appointment should meet established qualification standards.

**C. Active Case Flow Management.** The parties to this MOA agree to frequent and regular review of available data to determine the number of children in the local court system, whether timelines are being followed and whether agreed upon outcomes are being met. The parties also agree to use this data to identify and correct barriers that are preventing cases from having appropriate outcomes in a timely manner.

**D. Court Rules.** The parties agree to conduct an annual review and update of local court rules.

**E. Child Planning Conferences.** The parties agree to implement CPCs and to periodically update local rules for scheduling CPCs, notifying the participants and identifying the issues to be discussed.

**F. Continuous Calendaring.** At the end of each hearing, the next date and type of hearing that will occur shall be set and the juvenile clerk shall enter the information into JWISE in accordance with the Clerk's Rules of Record-Keeping. The information shall be provided by the social worker, in the memorandum of judgment, if applicable, to the parties before they leave the courtroom.

**G. Timely Court Orders.** At the conclusion of each hearing in which efforts are still being made to reunify with a parent or parents, an order or a memorandum of judgment from that hearing shall be signed by the Judge and distributed by the social worker to all parties and counsel. The Court and parent attorneys will instruct the parents to remain in the courtroom until they have been served with a copy of the Memorandum of Judgment. The final order shall be prepared, signed and filed within 30 days of the hearing. All proposed orders shall be submitted to all counsel or parties and the court in accordance with the local rules.

**H. Family Court.** The parties further agree to seek inclusion in Family Court. A major goal of Family Court is to coordinate all the case management of court events and service agency efforts for a single family in distress, in order to better serve that family and provide more consistent, efficient use of trial court time. Thus, in a Unified Family Court, any issue relating to a family – juvenile delinquency charges, neglect and abuse charges, termination of parental rights and adoptions, domestic violence, child custody and visitation rights, divorce and related financial issues like child support, alimony, or equitable distribution of property, and involuntary commitments- will be assigned to one case management team of judges and court staff.

**I. Case Planning** – When a child enters the child welfare system, case planning is used by the local Department of Social Services (DSS) to achieve the goal of the child’s safety, permanency and well-being. Essential tools are the Child and Family team (CFT) and Permanency Planning Action Team (PPAT) which conduct a structured, facilitated meeting which brings family members together so that with the support of professionals and community resources, they can create a written plan that ensures child safety and meets the family’s needs. The CFT/PPAT meeting will result in a list of planned activities that all participants agree to, and that list will be used to develop the actual Out-of-Home Family Services Agreement and/or Case Review Plan that will be provided to the parents. The Family Services Agreement Review contains the team’s decision regarding what action must be taken and/or what services are needed to assist a family to develop the capacity and capability to assure the child’s health and safety and to meet the child’s well being needs.

Attorneys for the parents shall be provided with notice of the date, time and place of the CFT / PPAT meeting and may attend and participate. The Family Services Agreement or Case Review Plan prepared as a result of the meeting shall be provided to the parents, their counsel, the GAL, the attorney advocate and counsel for the Department by personal delivery, mail or facsimile within five days of the date it is signed by the parties.

**J. Collaboration.** The parties recognize and support the vital role of partnerships with each other and with other agencies and organizations in improving outcomes for abused, neglected and dependent children.

Further, the parties to this MOA support the concept of shared leadership. Environments where shared leadership and collective visioning exist are able to support open exchanges

of information, better relationships among system participants, and stronger commitments to common goals.


The parties of this MOA shall create the opportunity for regular exchange between leaders in child welfare agencies, juvenile court administration and judicial officials. Issues to be addressed at these meetings can include legal and administrative issues in the court process such as continuous examination of causes of delay and ongoing review of the local rules to ensure compliance with state and federal legislation as it relates to achieving outcomes and securing funding. Finally, issues to be addressed at these meetings can include non-legal and administrative issues such as identifying needed services within the community and formulating a plan to make the services available.

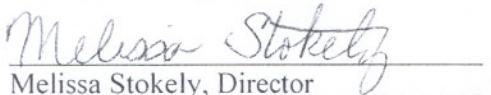
**K. Training.** The parties are committed to identifying unmet training needs and increase training opportunities for all key players in abuse/neglect/dependency court.

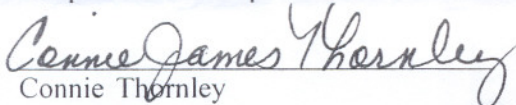
**L. Term of Agreement.** This agreement will be effective from the date of signature and will be reviewed biennially.

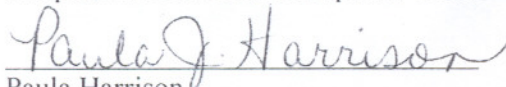
**M. Revisions.** Revisions of this agreement may be made upon the approval of all signatories and shall become effective upon adoption.

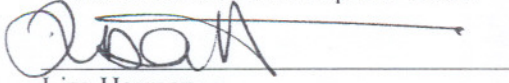
**N. Signatures.**  
Signed February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

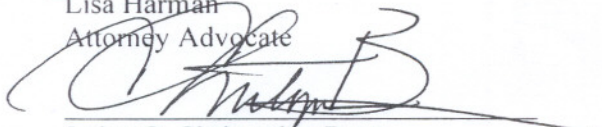
  
Sylvia Holley, Director  
Camden Co. Dept. of Social Services

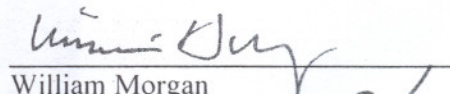
  
Melissa Stokely, Director  
Pasquotank Co. Dept. of Social Services

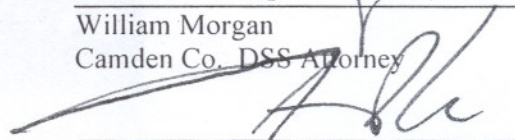
  
Connie Thornley  
Pasquotank Co. Clerk of Superior Court

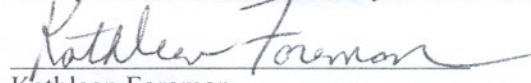
  
Paula Harrison  
Camden Co. Clerk of Superior Court

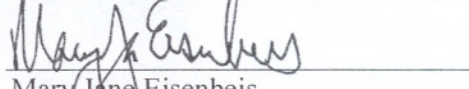
  
Lisa Harman  
Attorney Advocate


  
Judge C. Christopher Bean  
Chief District Court Judge

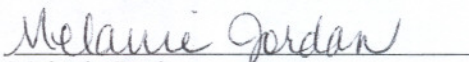
  
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Mary Jane Eisenbeis  
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