

SUPREME COURT OF ARKANSAS

Opinion Delivered December 15, 2011

IN RE CREATION OF THE
ARKANSAS SUPREME COURT
COMMISSION ON CHILDREN,
YOUTH AND FAMILIES

PER CURIAM

The Arkansas Supreme Court Ad Hoc Committee on Foster Care and Adoption Assessment was created in 1995 to study practices and make recommendations for improvements in how our courts handle foster care and adoption cases. *See In re Arkansas Supreme Court Ad Hoc Comm. on Foster Care & Adoption Assessment*, 319 Ark. 835 (1995).

The Ad Hoc Committee has been in place since that time and has provided valuable service to the court. The court specifically recognizes the direction and leadership provided by Justice Tom Glaze and Justice Annabelle Imber Tuck. We also wish to thank each of the committee members for their energy and dedication to improving the lives of children and families in our court system.

While great strides have been made in addressing the needs of children in foster care there are broader issues involving the interaction between children and youth and the state court system which require our attention. For that reason, we announce today the creation of the Arkansas Supreme Court Commission on Children, Youth and Families, which will replace our previous committee.

I. Arkansas Supreme Court Commission on Children, Youth and Families Mission Statement

The Arkansas Supreme Court Commission on Children, Youth and Families is created to study and recommend improvements to state courts and state court practice for children, youth, and families who are involved in proceedings in Arkansas Courts.

II. Goals

- ◆ Develop and sustain a collaborative model among leaders in our state that will produce improved outcomes for children, youth, and families in our courts.
- ◆ Identify, recommend, implement, and evaluate improvements for courts in order to be more effective in achieving safety, permanency, and well-being for children and youth.
- ◆ Promote data-driven, evidence-based practices in our courts.
- ◆ Promote fairness and due process for all parties and provide appropriate access to our courts for foster parents and relative care givers.
- ◆ Promote appropriate training for all participants in the child welfare and juvenile justice system.

III. Structure

The Commission will consist of (12) members. A member of the Arkansas Supreme Court shall serve as Chair of the Commission. The following members shall serve as members as a result of their service in positions in state government:

The Director of the Arkansas Department of Health and Human Services,
The Arkansas Commissioner of Education,
The Executive Director of Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, and
The Co-Chairs of the Joint Legislative Committee on Children and Youth.

In addition, the Court shall appoint six members of the Commission who shall serve a term of two years. These members may include limited and general jurisdiction judges, employees of the child welfare and juvenile justice system, representatives of the

legal community, representatives from business, foundations or organizations, and other state leaders who have demonstrated a commitment to children, youth, and families in Arkansas. The Commission's membership should also reflect the diverse ethnic, gender, and geographic communities of Arkansas.

The Commission shall meet quarterly unless otherwise called to meet by the Chair.

A vacancy on the Commission shall occur if a member misses three consecutive scheduled Commission meetings. Except for standing Commission members, no member shall serve more than two successive terms.

The Commission may adopt policies and may form or disband committees as necessary for the Commission's role as it deems appropriate.