

Children's Law Center of Indiana



Results of Court Improvement Program Survey

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The 2009 Cumulative Supplement to the CHINS Deskbook 2001 was distributed to Indiana judges and County Guardian ad Litem/Court Appointed Special Advocate directors through a Court Improvement Program grant from the Indiana Department of State Court Administration. Surveys asking the judges and directors for the reasons why CHINS petitions are filed and for their opinions on educational needs for key participants in the juvenile justice system were included with the books. Fifteen completed surveys were returned.

- The most common reason which causes a CHINS petition to be filed is parental drug use (cited by 11 responders), followed by child neglect (cited by 4 responders). The second most common reason is child physical abuse (cited by 2 responders).
- The most frequently indicated topics on which Department of Child Services family case managers would benefit most from more education are evidentiary issues for CHINS factfinding and termination hearings (cited by 5 responders) and substance abuse treatment issues (cited by 3 responders).
- The three topics on which volunteer Guardians ad Litem/Court Appointed Special Advocates would benefit most from more education are record keeping, interviewing skills, and understanding the CHINS process.

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- The three topics on which Department of Child Services attorneys and court appointed attorneys would benefit most from more education are evidence issues, CHINS statutes, and CHINS case law.
- The two topics on which foster parents would benefit most from more education are the role of foster parents and the CHINS process.
- The three topics on which private agency staff and service providers would benefit most from more education are the CHINS and termination court hearings and process, understanding hearsay and other evidentiary issues, and testifying.

A survey responder requested additional website information on the burden of proof in CHINS and termination hearings with statutory and case law citations and time limits for hearings with citation to statutory authority. An article will be written for the website on these topics.