



**QUALITY IMPROVEMENT CENTER
ON ENGAGING YOUTH IN
FINDING PERMANENCY**

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF
JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT JUDGES



QIC–EY Child and Youth Engagement Online Training for Legal Professionals Implementation Guide

This report is supported by the Administration for Children & Families (ACF) of the United States (U.S.) Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$5,000,000 million with 100 percent funded by ACF/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, ACF/HHS or the U.S. Government. For more information, please visit the ACF website, Administrative and National Policy Requirements, at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/administrative-and-national-policy-requireme>

The Quality Improvement Center on Engaging Youth in Finding Permanency (QIC-EY) is charged with advancing child welfare programs and practice to ensure that they are engaging and empowering children and youth authentically, especially in relation to permanency decisions. To help make systemic changes in how children and youth are engaged authentically in child welfare proceedings, the QIC-EY developed free, on-line training for court and legal professionals who are critical partners in this effort.

This Guide is designed to help those who wish to implement the training within their local or state jurisdiction. It includes tips and tools to help ensure the training is available to the judges, attorneys and other court professionals who participate in child welfare proceedings.



The QIC-EY Child and Youth Engagement Online Training for Legal Professionals Overview

What?

Funded by the Children's Bureau of the United States Department of Health & Human Services, the Quality Improvement Center on Engaging Youth in Finding Permanency (QIC-EY) is charged with advancing child welfare programs and practice to ensure that they are engaging and empowering children and youth authentically, especially in relation to permanency decisions. Courts and the legal professionals who work within them are critical partners in this effort. The following organizations have worked together to develop a dynamic, free, online learning experience specifically for this audience: the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law; the National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC), including the NACC's National Advisory Council for Children's Legal Representation; and With Lived Experience. This training has been codesigned by professionals with lived expertise in the child welfare system. It includes videos and interactive elements plus pretests and posttests to evaluate learning.

Who?

This training is intended for legal professionals working within child welfare court systems such as:

- Attorneys for agencies
- Attorneys and attorney guardians ad litem for children and youth
- Attorneys for parents
- Judges, hearing officers and magistrates
- Volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) and guardians ad litem
- Parent or youth mentors, social workers, investigators etc., serving on attorney teams
- Other court staff such as clerks, court officers, bailiffs, etc.

This training will support shifts in court culture, mindset, rules, policy and practice to ensure that children and youth are engaged authentically in court hearings and permanency planning. Learners will increase their capacity to engage children and youth authentically and meaningfully in decisions related to legal, cultural and relational permanency.

When and Where?

This five-module, asynchronous, virtual training can be completed at a time and place convenient for the learner. Each module will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. There is also a pre-test and a post test that will each take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The total time for completion is estimated to be 2 hours. The modules can be completed flexibly, enabling the learner to study each module in a separate session or all five modules on the same day.

How?

Learners will be guided through the five modules to build their skills for engaging children and youth. Each module includes interactive elements, videos, supplemental written and narrated content accessible online.

- Module 1: Child and Youth Engagement for Legal Professionals (17 minutes) focuses on research findings and national best practices. It invites learners to reflect on their own beliefs and professional roles in this work.
- Module 2: Trauma, Grief and Loss (21 minutes) is dedicated to building empathy in the learner by increasing understanding of the impact of trauma, grief and loss on children and youth. It includes lessons about trauma-informed practices that can help to promote engagement.
- Module 3: Adolescent Brain Development and Effective Interpersonal Communication (16 minutes) elevates the learner's knowledge of child development and adolescent brain science. It explains techniques to improve communication styles based on developmental stages and the use of age-appropriate language in legal settings.
- Module 4: Maximizing Child and Youth Participation in Court (14 minutes) provides concrete tips to improve child and youth engagement before, during and after court hearings.
- Module 5: Walk the Walk-Engaging Children and Youth in Court to Improve Outcomes and Experiences (15 minutes) summarizes and synthesizes the key learning objectives of the training and guides the learner in applying these skills to a hypothetical case scenario.

After completing the training, learners will have ongoing access to a resource bank of articles, tip sheets and other tools to continue deepening their skill set.

Why?

Children and youth are experts in their own lives. They must be engaged as partners, especially in decisions related to legal, cultural and relational permanency. This requires a paradigm shift for some child welfare courts and legal professionals in terms of training, policy and practice. The QIC-EY Child and Youth Engagement Online Training for Legal Professionals will help to ensure that all children and youth can partner safely and effectively in shared decision making.

Availability of Continuing Legal Education Credits and Certificates of Completion?

CLE credits may be available for this training depending on the CLE requirements in your state. Please check with your CLE governing board to determine if CLE credits are available for this training. A certificate of completion can be generated through the LMS after the posttest has been completed.

Steps for Planning and Implementing the QIC-EY Court Training

- 1. Develop a team.** The key to a successful rollout of any initiative is a dedicated, experienced team that is passionate about the work at hand. Developing a team of professionals will help build a strong foundation to launch the QIC-EY Court Training. The team should include strong leaders at the state and local level who can engage others that are committed to ensuring children and youth voices are included in dependency hearings. The team will be tasked with sustaining the planning process, securing buy-in, developing messaging, outlining strategies to roll out the training, and achieving their desired outcomes. In our experience, Court Improvement Program (CIP) staff, judicial officers, child welfare agency leadership, and other court or legal professionals are excellent components of the team to disseminate the training. Identify your team members on the Action Plan.
- 2. Create Buy-In.** Before you promote and share the training, you will want to identify how to create buy-in in your jurisdiction. Consider what the current culture is regarding children's presence in court and being active participants in their cases. In addition to identifying the current culture, identify existing statutes, court rules, or current initiatives that are supportive of engaging children and youth in the court process. Create messaging with this information in mind to explain how the training will apply to the jurisdiction. These factors will help the team decide how and where to disseminate the training, in particular whether the training will be shared within a local court jurisdiction or statewide. An additional method to create buy-in is to offer CLE credits for completing the training. Reach out to your local CLE governing board to get started. This Guide includes an overview of the training and detailed information about each module to help secure CLE credits.
- 3. Identify Training Participants.** This training is designed for court and legal professionals that participate in dependency proceedings, including judicial officers, attorneys, advocates, and other court staff. See the bulleted list above for more specific role information. You may wish to include other professionals that commonly participate in dependency hearings in your jurisdiction such as education or mental health liaisons, permanency or case coordinators, or other advocates. To reach these training participants, it may be helpful to collect existing email distribution lists for each of these roles. In addition, consider enlisting the help of those that oversee key roles such as the CIP Director, Administrative Office of the Courts, manager of the parent attorney organization, CASA Director, etc. During this step, the team should set a suggested timeline for participants to complete the training. This training can easily be completed within a week by setting aside 20–25 minutes each day to complete a module.

- 4. Identify Promotion Strategies.** After identifying the intended training participants, your team should identify strategies to promote and disseminate the QIC–EY Court training. The training is accessible through an online portal that requires the user to create an account. Therefore, the primary method to roll out the training is to share the registration link (provided on page 9 of this Guide) with those who are identified to take the training. Note: After June 30, 2026, this training will be accessible on the QIC–EY website QIC–EY. Develop email language that includes some of the messaging developed in Step 2 that highlights the importance and benefits of engaging children in their hearings to accompany the registration link. A sample email is included in this Guide. It's important to consider multiple avenues to promote and share the training. These strategies will likely differ depending on whether you choose to roll out the training locally within your jurisdiction or statewide to all courts handling dependency cases. For example, if you are disseminating the training locally, you may find local judges and attorneys helpful to share information about the training. If your goal is statewide dissemination, consider Court Improvement Program staff, statewide judicial training personnel or other staff from the state Administrative Office of the Courts. Consider asking Supervising Attorneys, CASA directors or others who oversee those identified as training attendees to distribute the training as well. Other options include posting the training on an existing training portal that professionals are familiar with and developing promotional materials such as flyers to post in courtrooms.
- 5. Launch.** Now it's time to put all the team's planning into action and send out the training registration. Send the registration link to the identified trainees using the email language you developed in Step 4 that briefly outlines the purpose and goals of the training objectives, how to access the training, and if CLE credits are offered. It's also helpful to attach the QIC–EY Court Training Overview (pages 3–4) to the email for further information.
- 6. Evaluate.** After launching the training, it's important to determine if your team met its goal of reaching identified trainees. Establish processes to evaluate participation, engagement, and impact of the training. The NCJFCJ can assist with retrieving training data once during the evaluation phase. You may also gather feedback from participants through surveys or brief follow-up discussions to identify successes and areas for improvement. If CLE credits were offered, consider asking the CLE governing board for data on how many received credit for accessing the training to determine the training's reach. Consider scheduling periodic check-ins with key stakeholders to address challenges and adjust dissemination strategies as needed. This Guide includes helpful links to the training, the QIC–EY website, and resources related to the CLE process to support ongoing evaluation and improvement.

QIC-EY Court Training Action Plan

Use this action plan to document your team's decisions and actions in your efforts to share the training.

1. Identify your team members and their roles

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

2. Create Buy-In

Consider laws, statutes, court rules, or initiatives that would support the implementation of training to increase the engagement of children and youth in their dependency cases.

- a. How would you describe the current culture within the court regarding family and child participation?

- b. How do you anticipate this training to apply to your jurisdiction's initiatives?



c. Will you seek CLE credits for this training?

d. Who governs the issuance of CLEs in your state? What is the process to apply and what documents are necessary to submit?

e. Who will submit documentation to the CLE governing board?

f. Deadline to submit materials for approval:

g. Is there a filing fee to process CLE's?



3. Identify Training Participants

Include the following roles:

- Attorneys for child welfare agency
- Attorneys and attorney guardians ad litem for children and youth
- Attorneys for parents
- Judges, Magistrates, Hearing Officers
- Volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) and guardians ad litem
- Parent or youth mentors, social workers, investigators etc., serving on attorney teams
- Other local court staff participating in child welfare proceedings such as clerks, court officers, etc.
- Other common roles that participate in dependency hearings in your local or state jurisdiction.

a. Estimated number of staff identified to take the training

b. Identify others who may have access to email distribution lists that will be helpful to disseminate the training.

c. Set a timeline: Work as a team to identify a target date for completion of the training. It may be beneficial to set the target date within 6–8 weeks of distribution.
Target date for completing the training:



4. Identify Promotion Strategies

Note: After June 30, 2026, this training will be accessible on the QIC-EY website: qic-ey.org

a. Develop email language to help share the training information and registration link.

b. Registration link: <https://spaulding.rockstarlearning.com/register/qic>

c. Identify who will send the email and registration link out:

d. Other promotional strategies:

5. Launch

a. Date training registration link is distributed

6. Evaluate

a. How will your team determine if the training has reached the intended trainees?

b. Will your team be gathering feedback from the participants?

c. Contact Andrew Wachter at awachter@ncjfcj.org regarding access to training completion data after the training is launched. NCJFCJ can only access data ONCE.



Sample Email Language

Good afternoon,

The Quality Improvement Center on Engaging Youth in Finding Permanency (QIC-EY), funded by the Children's Bureau, the QIC seeks to advance child welfare programs and practice to ensure that they are authentically engaging and empowering children and youth in child welfare throughout the U.S., especially in relation to permanency decisions. Courts and the legal professionals who work within them are critical partners in this effort to engage authentically, meaningfully, and directly with children and youth. To help ensure that the agency and courts align in their efforts to engage youth, I am asking our court professionals to take an online training course designed to increase capacity to engage children and youth authentically and meaningfully in court hearings and permanency planning decisions. We ask that you please complete the training by *(specific date)*.

Please use the link below to register for the training

<https://spaulding.rockstarlearning.com/register/qic>

The two-hour, five-module online training was created by the American Bar Association, National Association of Counsel for Children, and With Lived Experience. The training modules are: 1) Child & Youth Engagement for Court and Legal Professionals, 2) Trauma, Grief and Loss, 3) Adolescent Brain Development and Effective Interpersonal Communication, 4) Maximizing Child and Youth Participation in Court, and 5) Walking the Walk – Engaging Children and Youth in Court to Improve Outcomes and Experiences. I've also attached an overview of the training (you can use pages 3–4 of this Guide) that provides more detail. The training has been approved for ____ hours of CLE *(adjust as necessary)*.

The training is designed for judicial officers, attorneys, prosecutors, CASAs, clerks and other professionals who interact with children in the court.

Please note that the training does not need to be completed all in one sitting; you can start and stop. However, once you enroll, we ask that you complete the training within or by *(specific date)*. I believe this training will support our continued efforts to engage youth and children to determine the best permanency options.

Thank you all for your efforts to ensure children and families in our community are safe and successful.

If you have any questions about the project or the training, please contact *(chosen contact)*.

