

2026 VIRGINIA BEACH  
COURT IMPROVEMENT CONFERENCE

***BRIDGING  
KNOWLEDGE  
ADVANCING CHILD  
WELFARE TOGETHER***



**JANUARY 16, 2026  
8:00AM - 5:00PM**



**DoubleTree by Hilton  
Virginia Beach Oceanfront**



**Family & Children's  
Trust Fund of Virginia**

# **VIRGINIA BEACH JUVENILE AND DOMESTIC RELATIONS COURT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

## **ABOUT US**

The Virginia Beach Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court Improvement Program (CIP) aims to enhance the court system's ability to manage and resolve cases involving children, particularly in juvenile and family law.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM**

The Virginia Beach JDRDC Court Improvement Program focuses on integrating best practices into the policies and routines of the court system. It specifically addresses cases involving children who are abused, neglected, or in foster care. The program's goals include:

- Improving Case Management: Enhancing the court's ability to resolve child dependency cases in a timely and effective manner.
- Compliance with Laws: Ensuring adherence to federal and state laws and standards related to child welfare.
- Family Engagement: Actively involving families in the child dependency case processes to promote better outcomes for children.

## **IMPACT**

In collaboration with judges, attorneys, the Virginia Department of Social Services, persons with lived experience, and community partners, CIP strives to advance safety, permanency, and well-being for children, strengthen the judicial process for all individuals impacted by child welfare issues in Virginia Beach, and contribute to broader systemic reform.

# 2026 Virginia Beach Court Improvement Conference

## Bridging Knowledge; Advancing Child Welfare Together

January 16, 2026

DoubleTree by Hilton Virginia Beach Oceanfront

### PROGRAM

Breakfast & Registration.....8:00 AM

Welcome.....8:30 AM

The Honorable Judge Adrienne Bennett

Clerks.....8:40AM

Amy Burnham, Clerk of Court VBJDRDC

Keynote.....8:45 AM

Melvin Roy

CYBH Evidence Based Practices, PCIT, EMDR, TF-CBT.....9:15 AM

Jim Thornton, Child & Youth Services

Adult Protective Services, APS & CPS Appeals.....9:45 AM

Wendy Swallow, Adult Protective Services

Services for Victims of Trafficking.....10:00 AM

Deanna Wallace, Homeland Security

### **Morning Break - 10:30 AM**

(Sponsor Recognition)

Relief of Custody Petitions.....10:45 AM

Kyle Massey, DHS Court Liaison; Brad Hudgins, Esq.

School Resource Officers.....11:15 AM

Lt. Kevin Lokey, City of Virginia Beach Police Department

Truancy & Use of Interventions.....11:30 AM

Damion Wilson, VBCPS; Simone Boothe, Esq

**2026 Virginia Beach Court Improvement Conference**  
**Bridging Knowledge; Advancing Child Welfare Together**

**Lunch - 12:00 PM**  
(Sponsor Recognition)

CASA.....12:45 PM  
Kate Kosky, CEO Virginia Beach CASA

OCS, CPMT, FAPT, Funding, Evidence Based Services.....1:00 PM  
Dayna Bandy and Rachel Evans, Esq.

Evidence Based Services.....1:30 PM  
Ashley Sandman, Virginia Commonwealth University

Admin CPS v Court Findings.....2:15 PM  
Dr. Sheneka Wright, DHS; Elena Ilardi, Esq

**Afternoon Break - 2:45 PM**  
(Sponsor Recognition)

Kinship Program Explained.....3:00 PM  
Al Stewart, DHS; Christianna R. Dougherty-Cunningham, Esq

Best Use of CHINS.....3:30 PM  
Marisha Griffith, Court Services Unit

Why We Are Here.....3:45 PM  
Aprille Clark

Closing Remarks.....3:55 PM  
The Honorable Judge Adrienne Bennett

SOCIAL HOUR at MAHI'S.....4:00-5:00 PM

Please join us for a social hour at Mahi's. Don't forget to bring the red raffle tickets in your name tag holder for a beverage compliments of The Carlton F. Bennett Law Firm, LLC.

**VIRGINIA BEACH JDRDC  
COURT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM  
COMMITTEE**

**Hon. Adrienne L. Bennett**

*Virginia Beach Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court  
Presiding Judge, Committee Chair*

**Rachel Evans, Esq.**

*City Attorney's Office of Virginia Beach*

**Peter Imbrogno, Esq.**

*Attorney GAL*

**Kate Kosky**

*CEO, Virginia Beach CASA*

**Kyle Massey**

*Court Liaison, AIDS/HIV Services Coordinator, Virginia Beach  
Department of Human Services*

**Sarah W. Quiroga**

*Chief Deputy Clerk, Virginia Beach Juvenile and Domestic  
Relations District Court*

**Gregory D. Smith**

*Virginia Beach Court Service Unit Director*

**Al Steward**

*Child Welfare Administrator, Virginia Beach Department of  
Human Services*

**Jim Thornton**

*Clinical Administrator, Child & Youth Behavioral Health*

**Damion Wilson**

*Coordinator School Social Work Services, McKinney-Vento  
Liaison, Virginia Beach City Public Schools*



## KEYNOTE SPEAKER MELVIN ROY

Melvin Roy is a nationally recognized youth advocate, speaker, and founder whose journey from foster care to leadership has inspired audiences nationwide. A proud Virginian, he centers lived experience to help reshape systems serving young people.

He is the founder of Foster-U, launched while earning his B.S. in Human Services from Old Dominion University to expand college access and mentorship for foster youth. At ODU, Melvin served as Vice President of the Student Government Association and received the Ellen Neufeldt Leader of the Year Award and the Evon-Broderick Award for Community Engagement and Service.

Melvin has served as President of SPEAKOUT, Virginia's statewide youth advisory board, and held roles with UMFS, American Express, and FosterClub, contributing to national foster care reform efforts. He has worked with leaders in the Office of Vice President Kamala Harris and authored a federal policy report through the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, presented at the White House and to Members of Congress.

Currently, Melvin is the Independent Living Coordinator and an Advisory Board Member at The Friends of Foster Care, supporting young adults transitioning to independence. His governance experience includes board service with UMFS and the Old Dominion University Alumni Association. Featured in multiple media outlets, Melvin blends policy expertise, lived experience, and purpose-driven leadership.

### **2025 Virginia Beach Child Welfare Statistics**

- There are 187 children under the age of 18 in foster care and in 35 fostering futures in Virginia Beach.
- In FY25, there were 4,389 CPS referrals in VA Beach of which 1,215 were family assessments and 359 were investigations validated in the assessment track. 136 were founded investigations.

### **Virginia Child Welfare Statistics**

- There are 5,532 children under the age of 18 in foster care in Virginia.
- In FY25, there were 94,754 CPS referrals in VA, 37,887 were validated, and 2,808 were founded investigations.
- IN FY24, there were 41 children whose deaths were the result of abuse or neglect in Virginia.
- 23 of these children's families (56%) had prior or active child welfare involvement.
- Every 25 minutes, a child becomes homeless in Virginia. Homelessness and instability often go hand-in-hand with child abuse and neglect.
- Every 69 minutes, a child drops out of school. Abuse, trauma, and lack of support are major barriers to academic success.

# PRESENTERS



The Honorable Adrienne Bennett is a judge for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court of Virginia in Virginia Beach. She was elected to the bench by the Virginia General Assembly in March 2020. Prior to that she served a long tenure with the Virginia Parole Board, where she was appointed in 2004, and became its Chairwoman in 2017. Prior to serving on the parole board, Judge Bennett was a lawyer in private practice focusing on criminal defense, juvenile, and family law.



Amy Burnham has been the Clerk of Court for the Virginia Beach Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court for 7 years. Prior to that she worked in the Arlington County JDR Court for almost 20 years, becoming the Clerk of Court in 2007. She is a Certified Court Manager and Certified Court Executive through the National Center for State Courts. She currently serves as Secretary-Treasurer for the Association of Clerks of the District Courts of Virginia, having previously served as President.



Jim Thornton, M.Ed., LPC is the Child and Youth Behavioral Health Clinical Services Administrator of the Department of Human Services. He has over 32 years of experience working with youth with behavioral health needs and will be presenting specific evidence-based practices at CYBH, including optimal populations for each, ages, access, and treatment process. Jim enjoys cooking and playing with his 3 English Cocker Spaniels.



Wendy Swallow has been the Adult Services Administrator for the City of Virginia Beach, Department of Human Services for over 6 years. She graduated from East Carolina University with her Bachelor's in Social Work. In addition to her time with the City, she has worked with older and disabled adults for 35 years. Her presentation will focus on Adult Protective Services and provide a brief explanation of all other services offered in the Adult and Aging Division. In her spare time, she enjoys being with family, the outdoors and staying active.



Deanna "Dede" Wallace is the Victim Assistance Specialist (VAS) with Homeland Security Investigations (HSI). She received her BLS from the University of Mary Washington and has been in her field for over 20 years. Dede will be providing an overview of services provided to trafficking victims and how to identify trafficking. Outside of work she loves being with family and pets and to travel.



J. Kyle Massey, B.A. is the Family Services Specialist III for the Virginia Beach Department of Human Services. After graduating from William and Mary with a degree in Psychology, he has spent over 22 years in the Human Services field with the last 16 years in his current position. Kyle will be presenting on the challenges, statistics, and process of Relief of Custody cases. Outside of the office he is a film critic and creates DIY Halloween and Christmas decorations for outdoors.



Brad Hudgins, a Norfolk native, has served as an Associate City Attorney in the Virginia Beach City Attorney's Office since November 2015. Previously, Brad was an Associate at The Alliance Legal Group where he primarily represented clients on family law issues including divorces, custody and child support matters. He received his Juris Doctor from The George Washington Law School and an A.B. in Politics from Princeton University. Today he will be presenting on developments in law and procedure concerning petitions for relief of custody. In his spare time he enjoys traveling with family and all things pop culture.



Lieutenant Kevin Lokey brings more than 22 years of law enforcement experience and serves as the Commanding Officer of the Virginia Beach Police Department's Youth Services Unit, where responsibilities include managing the department's youth outreach and engagement initiatives, overseeing the School Resource Officer Program, and serving as the primary liaison to VBCPS, Juvenile Courts, the Juvenile Detention Center, and the Court Service Unit. He holds a Bachelor's in Psychology and Human Services from Old Dominion University and a Master's in Public Administration from Regent University.



Damion Wilson, MSW, has served as the Coordinator of School Social Work Services in Virginia Beach City Public Schools for 5 years and has been employed in the school system for over 18. Wilson graduated with a Bachelor's of Social Work from Norfolk State University and a Master's in Social Work from Virginia Commonwealth University. His presentation will provide an overview of the truancy process utilizing a multi-tier system approach that focuses on interventions and outcomes. In his spare time, Wilson enjoys spending time with his wife and reading books on sociology related themes.



Simone S. Boothe, Esq., has served as the Associate School Board Attorney for Virginia Beach City Public Schools for the past 3 years with a total of 15 years in the field. Simone graduated from Dayton School of Law with her Juris Doctorate J.D and Old Dominion University with an MPA. Today she will be speaking on compulsory attendance. In her spare time, Simone enjoys working within the community through her sorority, Suffolk Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) Suffolk (VA) Section.



# PRESENTERS



Kate Kosky, MBA, has been a leader in the non-profit community for over 21 years. After graduating from Valparaiso University with a triple major and double minor, she began working with at-risk children and families. She obtained her MBA from Regent University in 2018. She has been with Virginia Beach CASA as their CEO for two years and is passionate about the work they do for the community's most vulnerable children. Kate, her husband and two daughters enjoy traveling, NFL Football and living an active lifestyle.



Dayna Bandy, LCSW has served the City of Virginia Beach since 2001 as a clinician for children and adults, the CSA Coordinator for the Department of Human Services, and the CSA Administrator where she manages and supervises the Children's Services Act (CSA) program and The Office of Program Support (OPS). In her spare time, she is active in the Junior League of America Norfolk-Virginia Beach Chapter, where she has served in leadership positions, facilitated women's health fundraisers and community initiatives, and engaged in the legislative process to support HB 405 and SB232.



Rachel Evans, originally from Ontario, Canada, has represented the Virginia Beach Department of Human Services for 17 years as an Associate City Attorney. Rachel earned an English degree from Liberty University and taught English As A Foreign Language in Seoul, South Korea before studying law. After graduating from Regent University School Of Law in 2003, she has also served as a Guardian Ad Litem and court-appointed counsel for parents in child welfare matters and represented the Hampton Department of Human Services. Outside of work, her nine year old twins keep her in a constant state of adventure.



Ashley Sandman is the Partner Engagement Director for the Center for Evidence-Based Partnerships of Virginia. Following receiving her Bachelor's degree in Social Work from Longwood University, Ashley worked for 15 years to connect families to resources by fighting to reduce barriers and streamline access to services. Her primary interests continue to be reducing systematic barriers that individuals and families face regarding access to mental health wellness, in addition to improving outcomes for children within the child welfare system.



Sheneka Wright Ph.D. QMHP currently serves as the Child Protective Services Program Manager for Virginia Beach. Sheneka has an undergraduate degree from Norfolk State University, a Masters in Social Psychology from Walden University, and a Ph.D. in Counseling/Psychology from Regent University. She has 19 years of experience in child welfare, 5 years with the City of Virginia Beach Department of Human Services. Dr. Wright will focus her presentation on Family Assessments & Investigations and Administrative Findings.



Elena E. Ilardi has been an Associate City Attorney with the City of Virginia Beach City Attorney's Office since 2007 and primarily represents the Virginia Beach Department of Human Services in child abuse and neglect civil cases. Previously, Ms. Ilardi worked at Hunton & Williams, LLP in Richmond, Virginia. She received her Bachelor of Media Arts, Magna Cum Laude, from the University of South Carolina Honors College and went on to graduate from the University of Chicago Law School, with honors. Ms. Ilardi will be presenting on CPS Administrative findings and court adjudicatory findings.



Al Steward, originally from New Bedford, Massachusetts, has been the Child Welfare Division Administrator for the Virginia Beach Human Services Department since July 2016. After receiving both his bachelors and masters degrees from Norfolk State University, he has served in the human services field for over 30 years as a Child Welfare Social Worker, Social Work Supervisor, Child Welfare Programs Manager, and Child Welfare Administrator. Mr. Steward developed the Child Welfare Practice Model and was instrumental in developing the Housing Resource Center's (HRC) Integrated Services Team practice model as well as the HRC Visitor Management System.



Christianna Dougherty-Cunningham is an Associate City Attorney for the City of Virginia Beach. For the past 16+ years, she has primarily represented the City's Department of Human Services in all facets of Public Health, Adult Services, Adult and Juvenile Corrections and Forensic Services, Child Welfare, Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, Emergency Services, and Protected Information. Ms. Cunningham received her BA cum laude from Arizona State University and her J.D. cum laude from Saint Louis University School of Law. She also completed the National Institute of Trial Advocacy Advanced Trial Advocacy Skills Program at Georgetown University.



Marisha Griffith, MSW, is a Family Services Specialist II with the Virginia Beach 2nd District Court Service Unit, where she has served for 15 years. She has 25 years of experience working with youth and their families in various capacities. A proud Norfolk State University alumna, Marisha earned both her BSW and MSW there. Her presentation will focus on the effective use of CHINS (Children in Need of Services/Supervision). Outside of work, Marisha serves as the Secretary for FRIENDS of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court, advocates for autistic children and their families, and enjoys spending quality time with her family.



VIRGINIA BEACH JDRDC COURT  
IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE GRATEFULLY  
THANKS OUR PRESENTING SPONSOR



History of FACT

The Family and Children's Trust Fund (FACT) was created by the Virginia General Assembly in 1986 as a public-private partnership to raise funds, increase awareness and advise on policies for the prevention of family violence, including: child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, sexual assault, and elder abuse and neglect. FACT is the only organization in Virginia that addresses family violence and trauma across the lifespan.

Mission & Vision

FACT will amplify community programs and initiatives focused on the prevention and treatment of family violence and the protection of children through funding and awareness. FACT envisions a world in which no one in Virginia experiences family violence and all children are safe.

We believe...

FACT believes that capacity building and public understanding is key to preventing and treating the vast spectrum of child abuse, neglect, and family violence throughout Virginia. In order to effectively address these issues, we commit to support organizations, programs, and communities dedicated to treatment, prevention and intervention efforts, as well as serve as a central source of knowledge about child abuse, neglect, and family violence. This includes promoting collaboration, prioritizing innovation, and increasing awareness around family violence across the life span and the protection of children.

**Virginia Beach JDRC Court Improvement Committee  
Gratefully Thanks Our Sponsors**



**The Virginia Beach Bar Foundation champions equal access for the needy and underserved to our system of justice and promotes the education of the public about the importance of the rule of law in protecting their freedoms.**



**Samaritan House helps people free themselves from domestic and sexual violence, human trafficking, and homelessness.**

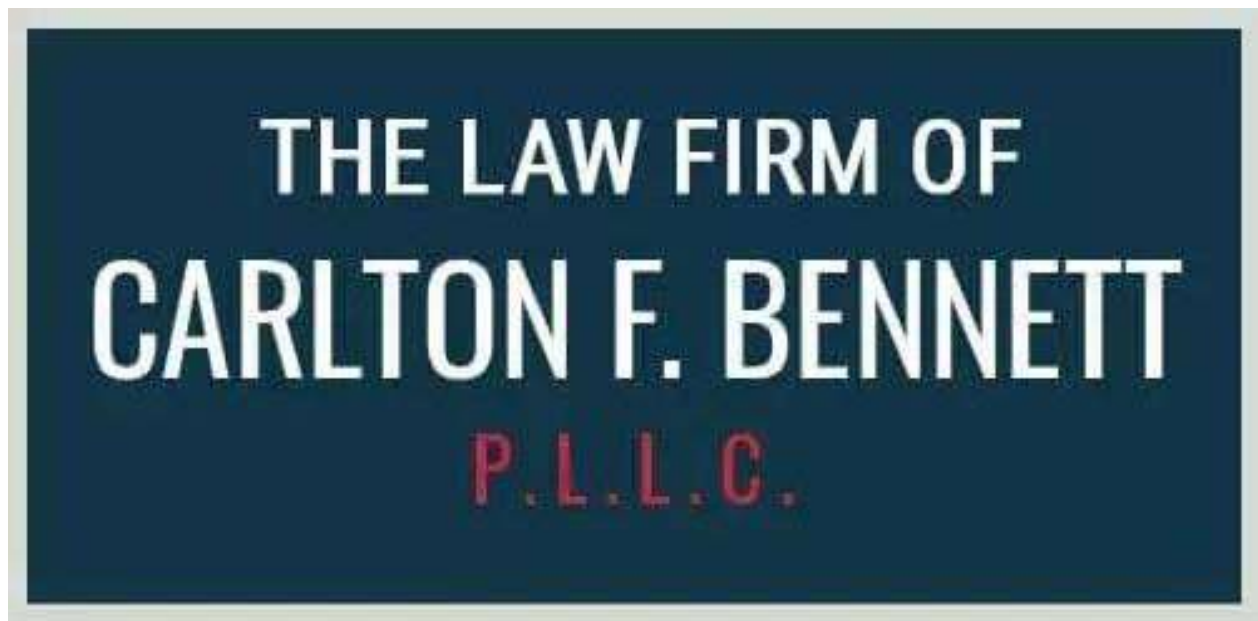


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