

COURT-CLERGY CONFERENCE 2019

Topic: Juvenile Dependency

Speaker(s): Hon. Ana L. España
Hon. Marian F. Gaston

What are three main points that the clergy should know about dependency court?

- With a few exceptions, after a child is removed from his/her parent(s) the focus of a juvenile dependency matter is reunification. Parents' participation in programs addressing the source of abuse or neglect is critical.
- The participation and support of family and the family's community, including their spiritual community, can greatly increase the chances of the children returning home.
- There are very rigid timelines for reunification, so parents should be encouraged to engage in reunification services, and visitation with their children, as soon as possible after a case is filed or when parents are offered "voluntary" services.

What are three ways in which clergy can help their congregants?

- Encourage congregations to facilitate and support reunification (offering rides, supervision of visitation, psychological and spiritual support for parents and temporary caregivers).
- Educate their congregants on the impact of domestic violence, drug and alcohol use, and mental health issues on children and the importance of asking for help with those challenges.
- Encourage congregants to participate in programs that support foster youth.

Three websites where clergy can go to learn more:

- <http://www.courts.ca.gov> click on "Self-Help;" then click on "Families and Children."
- <http://cdependencyonlineguide.info>
- <http://www.fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov/PDFs/caregiver.pdf>

Contact names, phone numbers and email addresses if clergy have questions:

- See Resource Flyers and web sites listed above