

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

The meeting was called to order by Chairman, Representative Michael R. O' Neal at 3:30 p.m. on January 26, 1993 in room 313-S of the Statehouse.

All members were present except:

Representative Rand Rock - Excused

Committee staff present:

Jerry Donaldson, Legislative Research
Jill Wolters, Revisor of Statutes
Cindy Wulfkuhle, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the Committee:

Jolene Grabill, Executive Director, Corporation for Change
Larry Rute, Chairperson, Corporation for Change Family Court Advisory Committee
Jeffrey Kuhn, Director, National Family & Court Resource Center
Dr. Hunter Hurst, Director, National Center on Juvenile Justice

Chairman O'Neal announced the appointment of Representative Carmody, Representative Macy & Representative Everhart to serve on a sub-committee on HB 2013.

The Committee met jointly with the Joint Committee on Children & Families for a presentation on Family Courts by Corporation for Change & National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

Jolene Grabill, Executive Director, Corporation for Change, appeared before the committee and stated that the 1992 Legislature created the Corporation for Change as a public/private partnership established to implement a comprehensive Kansas policy for children and families.

Larry Rute, Chairperson, Corporation for Change, Family Court Advisory Committee appeared before the committee. Larry gave a summary on what they believe are the advantages of the Family Court system. (Attachment #1)

Jeffery Kuhn, Director, National Family & Court Resource Center, appeared before the committee to give information on Family Court Systems in the United States. Kuhn stated that the family court system is about the integration of services for children and families through the court process by specializing in family and juvenile law through the judiciary. Family Courts have jurisdiction in matters relating to domestic relations and children.

Twelve states have Family Courts. The first was Rhode Island in 1961, with the newest states being Nevada, Missouri & Florida. At this time, they feel that Nevada would be a model act to follow. Nevada was sold on the Family Court because they believed that the family court system would be more expeditious in divorce matters, therefore having less effect on the children, and also in dealing with child neglect and abuse matters. Family Courts were created in the two largest counties of Nevada.

Dr. Hunter Hurst, Director, National Center on Juvenile Justice, stated that the Family Court Systems are doing well because of strong judicial leadership. He believes that Kansas has a lot of population that is sparse and that we must reorganize the jurisdictions so that the Family Court System can better serve the families.

The Committee adjourned at 4:30 p.m. The next Committee meeting is January 27, 1993 at 3:30 p.m. in room 313-S.

GUEST LIST

HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

DATE January 26, 1993

[illegible]

TESTIMONY OF LARRY R. RUTE
CORPORATION FOR CHANGE
(913) 296-0100

HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

Representative Michael O'Neal, Chairperson
Tuesday, January 25, 1993

I would like to thank the Chairperson and members of the Judiciary Committee for this opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the family court concept.

My name is Larry Rute. I have the privilege of serving as Chairperson for the Corporation for Change, Family Court Advisory Committee. As you are aware, the Corporation for Change was created by the 1992 Legislature as a public/private partnership established to implement a comprehensive Kansas policy for children and families. Among other responsibilities, the legislature charged the Corporation with planning a family court project in both an urban and rural setting. The sum of \$30,000 was appropriated for this study.

The members of the Family Court Advisory Committee were recruited from a wide spectrum of Kansans concerned with the coordination of the various components of the court system. The Committee membership has been attached with this testimony and is composed of legislators, judges, court services and administrative staff, attorneys, and child advocates. The Corporation has contracted with consultants with the necessary national expertise to assist us to identify and define key components of an appropriate family court system including family court purpose, function, jurisdiction, and structure.

I am pleased to advise the Judiciary Committee that the Corporation has engaged the services of E. Hunter Hurst, Director, National Center on Juvenile Justice, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Jeffrey A. Kuhn, Director, National Family Court Resource Center, under an agreement with the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Pursuant to this agreement the National Council will prepare on or before May, 1993, written recommendations to the Corporation establishing a realistic plan for the adoption and formation of a system that will seek a less adversarial processing and handling of family-related cases.

We believe that the final result of our efforts will be the establishment of a revised family court system which will provide distinct advantages to Kansas tax payers. We believe that at least some of the advantages to the establishment of a comprehensive family court system are as follows:

- Allows for the more efficient use of resources;
- Helps to eliminate duplication of effort;

- Encourages the development of a comprehensive information data base;
- Encourages the development of alternatives to the adversarial model;
- Encourages the development of a comprehensive array of services to families in crises; and
- Encourages the use of the family court to serve as an important liaison to social services agencies providing case related services.

In conclusion, over the years there has been considerable debate on how the court system can improve staffing, lower case loads and reduce other operational problems. Changes can and should be made to our Court structure to accomplish these goals. It is my pleasure to introduce to you E. Hunter Hurst and Jeffrey A. Kuhn, who will provide additional information to you.

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