



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

Administrative Office
1900 Kanawha Blvd., East
Bldg. 1, Room E-316
Charleston, West Virginia 25305
(304) 340-2305 Jennifer Bundy
(304) 340-2306 April Harless
(304) 558-4219 / TTY
(304) 558-1212 / FAX
Web Site: www.courtswv.gov
Twitter: [WVCourts](https://twitter.com/WVCourts)
Flickr: www.flickr.com/photos/courtswv/
Email: Jennifer.Bundy@courtswv.gov
Email: April.Harless@courtswv.gov

Chief Justice to open conference on child abuse, neglect

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MARTINSBURG, W.Va. – Supreme Court Chief Justice Brent D. Benjamin will open the 2013 series of child abuse and neglect cross-training conferences with a speech at 9 a.m. Tuesday, July 9, at the Martinsburg Holiday Inn.

After he speaks, a panel of young adults who were in the state's care will share their experiences and recommendations for systemic improvement.

The theme of the conferences this year is "Don't Forget to Remember Us," a reminder that the wishes and best interests of children are paramount in court system and social service processes. Chief Justice Benjamin also will address the closing session of the Martinsburg conference on Thursday, July 11.

"Every child deserves an address, a home, a school, and a loving supportive family. Each child deserves nurturing, and a fair chance to fulfill his or her future. Every child deserves permanency in his or her life," Chief Justice Benjamin said. "We cannot let these children be forgotten."

About 140 professionals of multiple backgrounds have registered to attend the Martinsburg training, which will repeated to a group of 300 professionals at Embassy Suites Hotel in Charleston beginning on July 15.

One day of each three-day conference will be devoted to juvenile law: July 10 in Martinsburg and July 16 in Charleston. Justice Margaret Workman will open that session in Charleston.

Another day is devoted to training for attorneys who want to be guardians *ad litem* for children in child abuse and neglect cases. That will be July 11 in Martinsburg and July 17 in Charleston.

The conferences are open to the public. More participants are welcome on the three days of the Martinsburg conference, but the Charleston conference has reached capacity.

Chief Justice Benjamin and Justice Workman are passionate about just treatment of children in the state's care.

Justice Workman led the Supreme Court to create the Adjudicated Juvenile Rehabilitation Review Commission when she was Chief Justice in 2011 to look at the Division of Juvenile Services' operations plan and programs at the Industrial Home for

Youth in Salem and the Kenneth “Honey” Rubenstein Center in Davis. The Commission issued a progress report in March and last month broadened the scope of its mission from just juvenile justice facilities to all out-of-home placements that result from an adjudication of delinquency. The group also will focus on examining and improving resources and services for juveniles transitioning out of placement.

Chief Justice Benjamin has led the effort to expand juvenile drug court programs throughout the state, established the Access to Justice Commission, and this year established the New View program to tackle cases in which children have been in out-of-home placements for lengthy periods, with the goal of finding permanent homes.

More information about the West Virginia Court Improvement Program’s annual trainings is available at <http://wvcip.com/training.html>. The Court Improvement Program (CIP) is a multidisciplinary group chaired by Circuit Court Judge Gary L. Johnson of the Twenty-Eighth Judicial Circuit (Nicholas County). A grant from the federal Administration for Children and Families and matching funds from the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia make the annual trainings and other CIP initiatives possible.

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