



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.courtsvw.gov
Twitter: [WVCourts](https://twitter.com/WVCourts)
Flickr: www.flickr.com/photos/courtsvw/
Email: Jennifer.Bundy@courtsvw.gov
Email: April.Harless@courtsvw.gov

Judge Johnson, other state leaders attend National Convening on Trafficking and Child Welfare

For immediate release

Photo at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/courtsvw/>

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Twenty-Eighth Judicial Circuit (Nicholas County) Judge Gary L. joined other West Virginia and national leaders at the White House on Wednesday, June 10, for a Convening on Trafficking and Child Welfare.

Actress/advocate Ashley Judd was one of the speakers who shared her personal experiences and introduced “Sex Trafficking in the USA,” the first part of the film *A Path Appears* (<http://apathappears.org/film/>), which shares the stories of trafficking survivors.

Sponsored by the federal Administration for Children and Families, the event educated leaders on the increased dangers vulnerable children in state care face of being trafficked, which is when someone “uses force, fraud, or coercion to control another person for the purpose of engaging in commercial sex acts or soliciting labor or services against his or her will,” according to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (www.traffickingresourcecenter.org). State teams were encouraged to develop plans to prevent and treat child sex trafficking.

Lieutenant D.B. Swiger of the West Virginia State Police and Deputy Commissioner Sue Hage of the West Virginia Bureau for Children and Families also participated in the event. Lieutenant Swiger and Cortney Simmons run the Missing Children’s Clearinghouse of the Center for Children’s Justice of the West Virginia State Police.

The state team decided that the trafficking workgroup of the Center for Children’s Justice will partner with the West Virginia Court Improvement Program (www.wvcip.com), of which Judge Johnson is chairman, to implement legislation and protocols to protect children in the state’s care from falling prey to sex trafficking and to treat children who have been trafficked.

“It will take statewide collaboration to create a safety net for children at risk of being trafficked,” Judge Johnson said. “I look forward to working with Lieutenant Swiger and other state leaders in this essential endeavor.”

The state team learned that children who have been removed from their homes and placed in the care of the state are more susceptible to being sex trafficked.

Nationally, an estimated 55 to 97 percent of child trafficking victims have had child welfare involvement, according to Crystal Duarte of the Child Welfare Capacity Building Center for Courts. Children who experience the “duality of care and abuse” and sense that their care is tied to funding may find similarities in sex trafficking. Red flags for trafficking include truancy, running away, homelessness, and tattooing or branding.

Everyone can help child trafficking victims by being vigilant and reporting suspected trafficking to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center at 1-888-373-7888.

##