

Tennessee JCAMP Project Summary

January 2023 – October 2023

Court Improvement Program

What is JCAMP?

The Judicial, Court, and Attorney Measures of Performance (JCAMP) Project is funded by the Children's Bureau and conducted by the Capacity Building Center for Courts (CBCC). The Project aims to help child welfare, legal, and other professionals understand and improve child welfare court practices by shaping the decision-making process regarding data collection. Tennessee was chosen as an implementation site for the Project in January 2023.

During the implementation, the Tennessee Court Improvement Program (CIP) curated an interdisciplinary JCAMP team to select and capture JCAMP Performance Measures. These Performance Measures fall into five

categories (Engagement, Due Process, High-Quality Legal Representation, Safety, Permanency) and overlap along three dimensions (Professional Practice, Court Process, Family Experience).

Parents' attorneys, Guardians ad litem (GALs), and Juvenile Court Judges/Magistrates across the State of Tennessee were surveyed utilizing JCAMP data collection tools. Surveys asked respondents to rank the frequency/consistency of professional practices and court processes as they relate to JCAMP Performance Measures. Focus groups to gather additional data were conducted with Judges/Magistrates following the completion of the surveys.

Attorney Survey Respondents



300 surveyed in Aug. 2023

- ❖ 82% practiced as both GAL and parent attorney
- ❖ 74% were solo practitioners
- ❖ 80% were appointed by State
- ❖ 50% had at least 9 years of professional experience
- ❖ 50% admitted to the bar by 2011

Regions of Practice



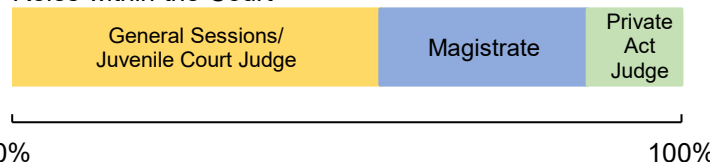
Judicial Survey Respondents



85 surveyed in July 2023

- ❖ 20% had 1 year or less of experience on the bench
- ❖ 50% had at least 9 years of experience on the bench
- ❖ 73% often practiced and 8% never/rarely practiced in juvenile court prior to taking the bench

Roles within the Court

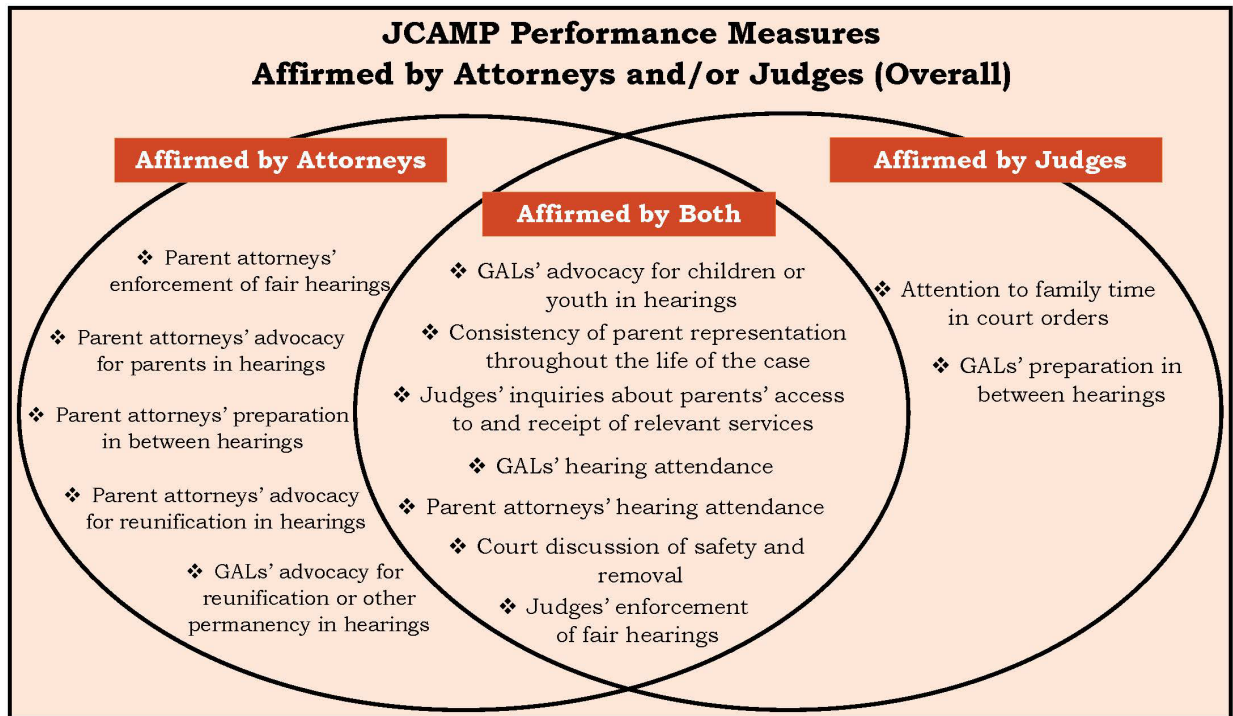


Performance Scores

Survey respondents ranked the frequency and consistency of professional practices and court processes on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 = Never, 5 = Always). The average rankings are reported below as 100-point Performance Scores. The scores are colored by a green-to-red (high-to-low) gradient.

Performance Measure Categories	Performance Scores		
	Subcategory	Per Attorneys	Per Judges
Due Process	GAL Practice	60	64
	Parent Attorney Practice	84	74
	Judicial Practice	86	94
High-Quality Legal Representation	Court Process	100	89
	GAL Practice	84	84
	Parent Attorney Practice	85	79
Safety	Judicial Practice	81	85
Permanency	Court Process	72	79
	GAL Practice	81	70
	Parent Attorney Practice	92	73
	Judicial Practice	75	83

Consensus and Disagreement among Attorneys and Judges



**A JCAMP Performance Measure is "affirmed" if its performance score is 80 or above on average.*

Judges and attorneys tend to disagree more often about **Parent Attorney Professional Practice**.

Judges and attorneys tend to agree more often about **GAL Professional Practice**.

Other Interesting Findings

- ❖ Magistrates tended to rate measures related to Safety and Permanency relatively lower on average than Private Act Juvenile Court Judges and General Sessions/Juvenile Court Judges across almost all subcategories.
- ❖ Attorneys representing both parents and youth tended to rank court processes and professional practices lower on average relative to attorneys representing parents only or youth only.

Judicial Focus Groups Common Themes

There were common themes in discussions across the focus group topics:

- ❖ Attorney compensation
- ❖ Need for an attorney mentorship program
- ❖ Attorney burn out
- ❖ Issues with attorney caseloads
- ❖ Difficulty representing absent parties

What's Next

Additional Data Collection

Additional data collection is necessary to realize the JCAMP goals and objectives.

1. JCAMP provides tools for measuring Family Experience. This dimension was not adequately captured during Tennessee's initial implementation.
2. Conducting attorney focus groups will give us an opportunity to collect contextual data.
3. Survey responses may vary due to geography, and we require more responses from the west Tennessee area to adequately evaluate projects.

Data Collection Process

Not all JCAMP Performance Measures were equally measured in both surveys. Therefore, we need to reevaluate our process for future data collection.

Reevaluation involves the following:

1. Adjust the quality, quantity, and style of questions posed in surveys.
2. Utilize other data collection methods such as court observations and case file reviews.

CIP Strategic Plan

The CIP will continue to utilize JCAMP Performance Measures, data collection tools, and results to inform the CIP strategic plan. The ultimate goals are (i) to provide for the safety, well-being, and timely permanence of children in foster care; (ii) to support engagement of families in child welfare cases; and (iii) to improve collaboration between the courts and DCS on data collection, data analysis, training, and Child & Family Services Review.