

Court Improvement Program

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The State Court Improvement Program (CIP) was created as part of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA) of 1993, Public Law 103-66, which among other things, provided Federal funds to State child welfare agencies and Tribes for preventive services and services to families at risk or in crisis. OBRA designated a portion of these funds (\$5 million in fiscal year 1995 and \$10 million in each of FYs 1996 through 1998) for grants to State court systems to conduct assessments of their foster care and adoption laws and judicial processes, and to develop and implement a plan for system improvement. Awards are made to the highest appellate courts in States participating in the IV-E program.

The Promoting Safe and Stable Families Amendments of 2001, Public Law 107-133, reauthorized the Court Improvement Program through FY 2006. The law also expanded the scope of the program to: (1) include improvements that the highest courts deem necessary to provide for the safety, well-being, and permanence of children in foster care, as set forth in ASFA; and (2) implement a corrective action plan, as necessary, in response to findings identified in a child and family services review of the State's child welfare system. Finally, the Court Improvement Program authority was transferred to a new section 438 of the Social Security Act.

Most recently, the Court Improvement Program was reauthorized under Public Law (P.L.) 116-260, Section 305 of title III of Division CC of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, which Congress funded at \$30 million annually. There was a small substantive change made to the CIP in the 2021 reauthorization, in that it merged the former CIP training and data grants into one funding stream, retaining however the prior purposes.

As of FY 2023 all eligible States (50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands) are receiving annual Court Improvement Program grants. All CIPs have efforts around improving legal representation, hearing quality, and have joint efforts with the child welfare agency. Other common focus areas include efforts to improve court data, timeliness and quality of permanency, engagement of parties, Indian Child Welfare and tribal collaboration, foster care prevention, safety decision-making and equity. For further information, call the Children's Bureau at 202-795-7771.

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