

Family-Friendly Courts: Opportunities for State Legislators to Improve Civil Court Processes

NCSL Youth Homelessness Fellows | September 19, 2023

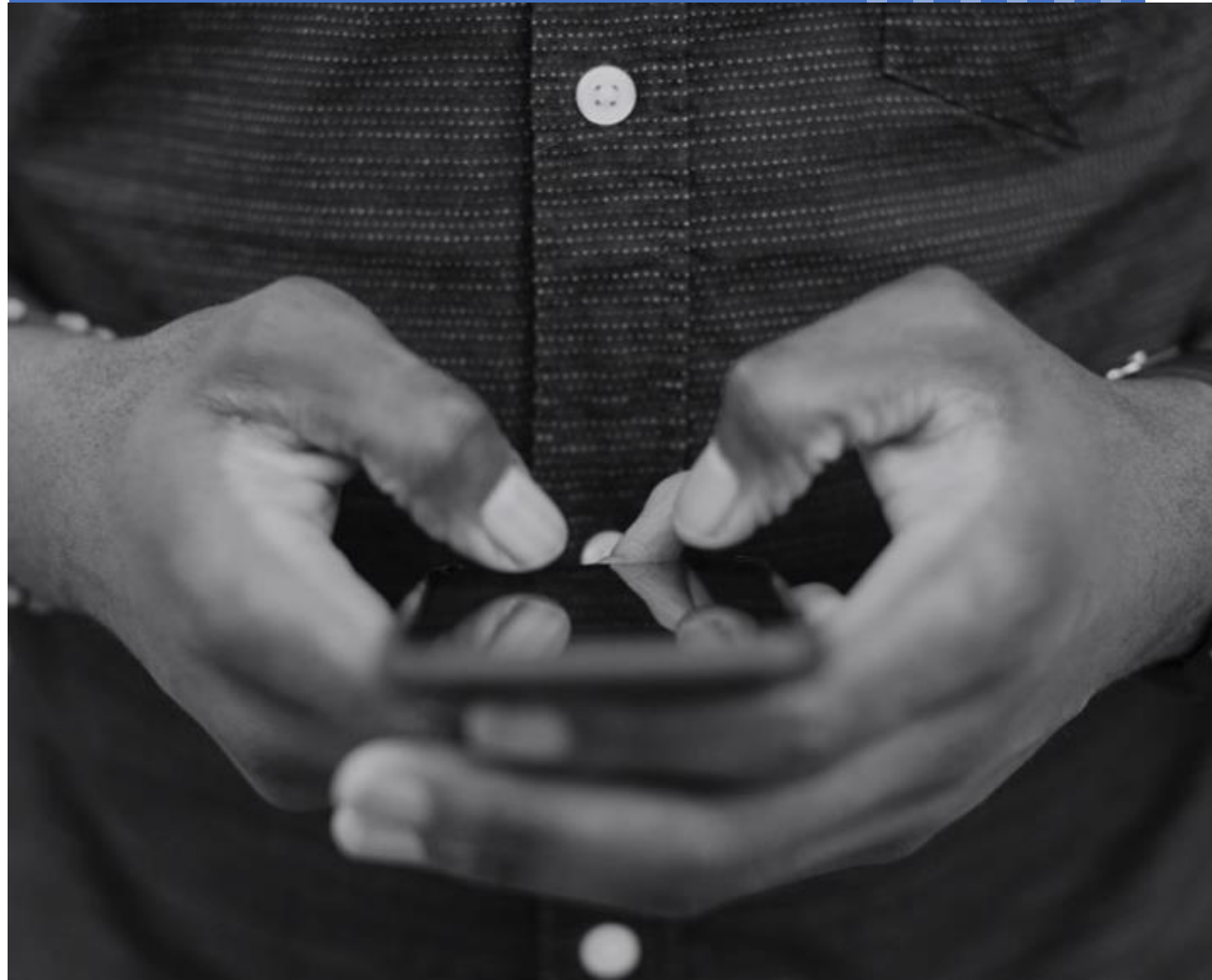
Session Overview

- Why family-friendly courts?
- The legislative and judicial branches both play a role in shaping civil court processes.
- Panel discussion featuring perspectives from a lived expert, a former legislator and a legal professional.



NCSL Resources

- [Family-Friendly Courts: Opportunities for State Legislators To Improve Civil Court Processes](#)
- [Family-Friendly Courts: State Legislatures' Role in Improving Eviction Proceedings](#)
- [Family-Friendly Courts: State Legislatures' Role in Improving Minor Guardianship Proceedings](#)
- [Family-Friendly Courts: Facts and Legislative Opportunities](#)



Speaker and Panelists



Elizabeth Arrieta

Lived Expert Action
Panel, Colorado Office of
the Child's
Representative



Deb Seltzer

Executive Director,
Maryland Legal Services
Corporation, Liaison to
Maryland Access to
Counsel in Evictions Task
Force



**Former Rep. Jim
Steineke**

Chair of 2018 Wisconsin
Legislative Council Study
Committee on Minor
Guardianships



Nora Sydow

Managing Director,
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Court trends, initiatives, and innovations



Prevention.

Community Collaboration.

User-centered.

Family-Centered Justice

An approach to justice that seeks to cultivate courts that focus on families and contribute to communities where all families thrive.



Family-Centered Justice: Conceptual model



Child and Family Community Mapping

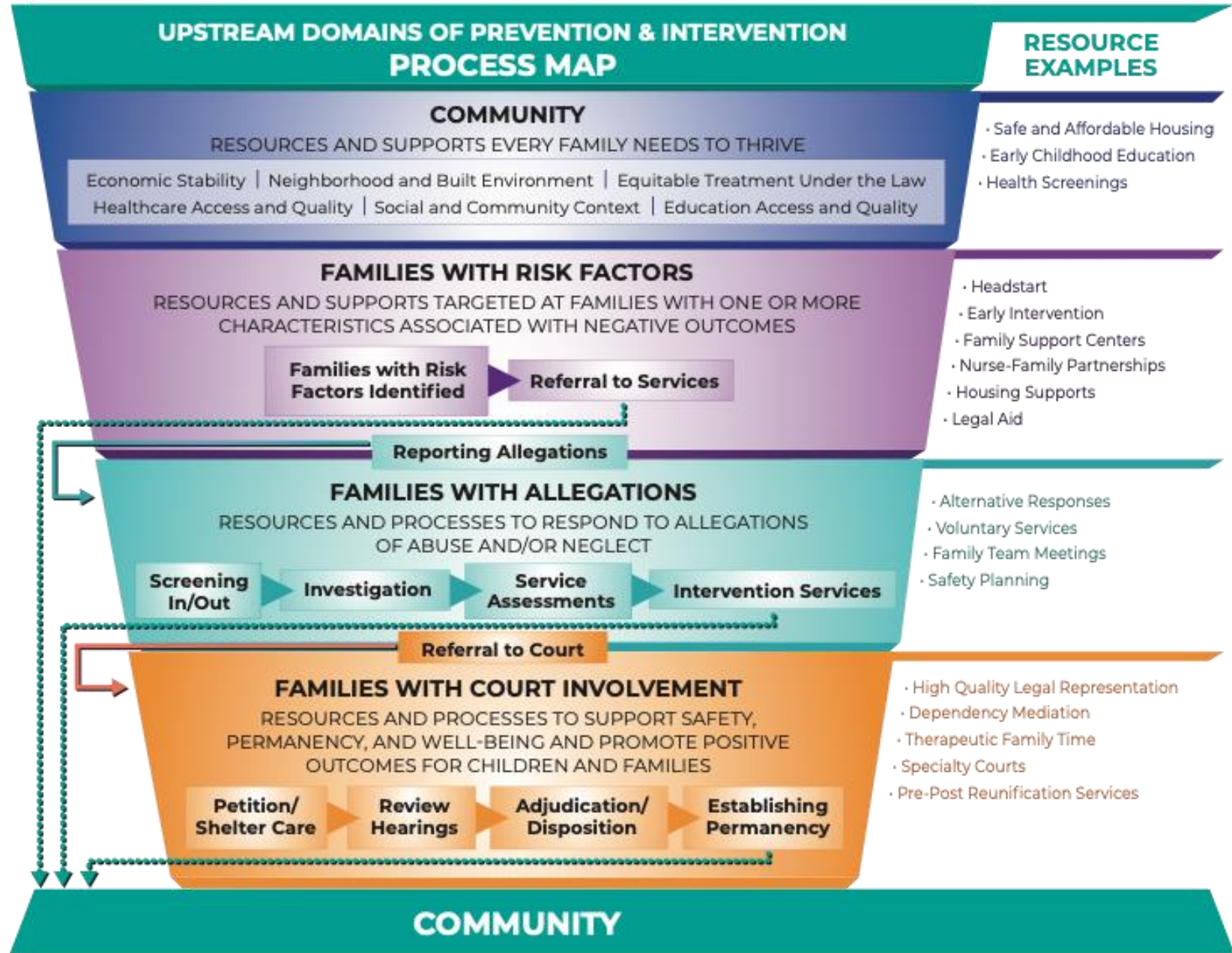
Upstream: A Community-Based Approach

- Leverages court resources, judicial leadership, and child welfare agency partnerships
- To enhance community collaboration
- Through state and local coordination, community mapping, and action planning



www.ncsc.org/upstream

Upstream Domains



Minor Guardianship

Court Program Spotlight:
Dependency Alternatives Program (DAP)



DAP Goals:

- Divert dependency cases in a protective manner while conserving time, resources, and money.
- Provide a stable legal outcome by keeping the families who reach a legal resolution through DAP outside of the child welfare system

https://www.ncsc.org/data/assets/pdf_file/0038/79697/Dependency-Alternative-Program-Pima-AZ.pdf

Holistic Solutions to Housing Problems

Resolving the Immediate Problem

Legal Aid & Pro Bono Organizations -

Identify meritorious defenses, procedural defects, and settlement opportunities

Mediation Services -

Help landlords and tenants find common ground and work together towards a resolution

Financial Assistance Programs -

Connect to rental assistance, utility assistance, landlord incentives, and other programs

Preventing Future Crises

Housing Counseling & Education -

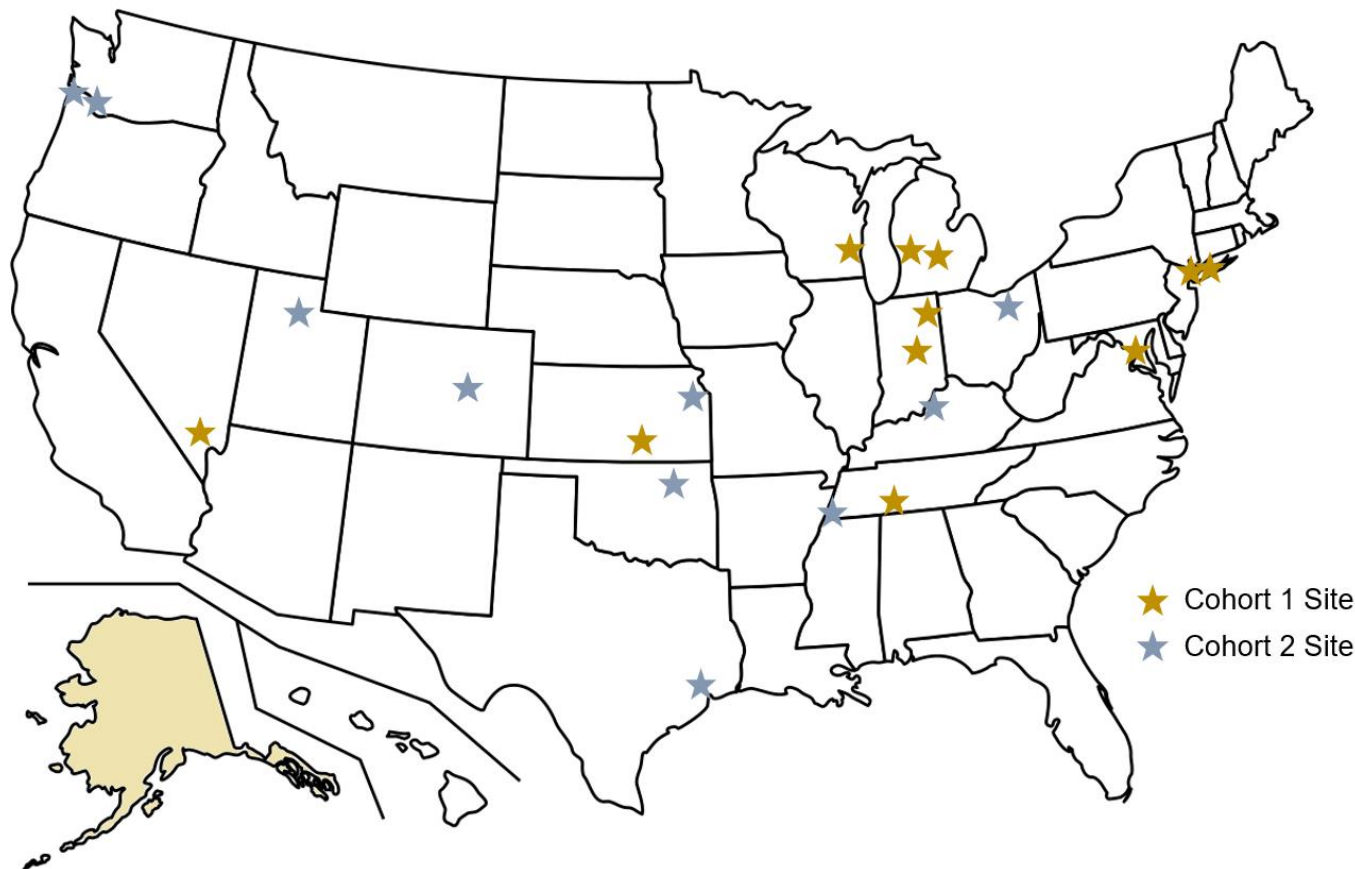
Support tenants in securing new housing and creating stronger landlord-tenant relationships

Financial Counseling & Empowerment -

Educate litigants about financial management and budgeting

Wraparound Supportive Services - Support access to education, employment, food, jobs, healthcare, public benefits, mental health services & more

Eviction Diversion Initiative Grantees



First Cohort

Alaska (Statewide)
 Washington, DC
 Indianapolis, IN
 Fort Wayne, IN
 Wichita, KS
 Grand Rapids, MI
 Lansing, MI
 Las Vegas, NV
 Brooklyn, NY
 Long Island, NY
 Chattanooga, TN
 Milwaukee, WI

Second Cohort

Colorado Springs, CO
 Lawrence, KS
 Louisville, KY
 Akron, OH
 Tulsa, OK
 Astoria, OR
 Memphis, TN
 Houston, TX
 Salt Lake City, UT
 Vancouver, WA

Grants Awarded: \$6.5 Million

Questions?

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