



Administrative Office of the Courts

Chief Justice Matthew B. Durrant
Utah Supreme Court
Chair, Utah Judicial Council

September 12, 2024

Ronald B. Gordon, Jr.
State Court Administrator
Neira Siaperas
Deputy State Court Administrator

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Judiciary Interim Committee

FROM: Ron Gordon (State Court Administrator), Lauren Anderson (Judicial Institute Director), Tonia Wilson (Judicial Educator), and Amy Hernandez (Domestic Violence Program Manager)

RE: Proposed Judicial Education Program Required by HB 272

During the 2024 General Session, the Utah Legislature passed HB 272 and required the State Court Administrator to develop or recommend a proposed training and education program for judges, commissioners, and court personnel. This judicial education program must strengthen the courts' ability to identify domestic violence and child abuse in child custody proceedings and make custody decisions that "prioritize a child's physical and psychological safety and well-being" ([UCA 78A-2-232\(2\)\(a\)](#)).

We anticipate that this judicial education program will be carried out over 18 months to two years with assistance from local and national providers. This program will provide training about domestic violence, child abuse, and how the courts can address these issues in civil cases. The training options will range from basic, introductory trainings, to in-depth and advanced trainings to meet the diverse backgrounds of Utah's judicial officers.

The State Court Administrator will implement the following program to comply with HB 272 requirements:

1. Specific personnel positions that will be required to participate in the program:
 - a) Judicial Officers and Court Commissioners
 - b) Court Personnel
2. Performance metrics for the program and how those metrics may be tracked:
 - a) Increased knowledge tracked by pre and post knowledge assessment outcomes.

The mission of the Utah judiciary is to provide the people an open, fair, efficient, and independent system for the advancement of justice under the law.

- b) Improved judicial skills in cases involving parent-time and custody decisions tracked by implementation survey responses.
 - c) The implementation of trauma-informed care practices tracked by a completed trauma-informed care audit,
 - d) Improved domestic violence, child abuse, and procedural justice outcomes for court patrons tracked by court patron feedback collected through:
 - i. Survey responses and
 - ii. Focus groups conducted by the Utah Domestic Violence Coalition (if funded through state or grant funding).
3. An estimate of the costs to implement the program: \$160,000
- a) \$50,000 for conference costs (includes speaker fees, lodging, per diem, and travel costs for judicial officers)
 - b) \$110,000 for a position within the Utah Domestic Violence Coalition to manage and conduct the focus groups
4. An identification of potential grant sources, if any, that may be available to fund the program in whole or in part.
- a) STOP Abuse Formula Program Grant,
 - b) Justice for Families Program Grant,
 - c) State Justice Institute Curriculum Adaptation & Training Grant, and
 - d) Disability Program Grant.

This program will be administered by AOC staff:

Amy Hernandez, Domestic Violence Program Manager, amymh@utcourts.gov
Lauren Andersen, Judicial Institute Director, laurena@utcourts.gov