



Judiciary of Guam

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Judiciary Hosts Enhancing Responses to Child-Related Matters Involving Domestic Abuse Training in Partnership with NCJFCJ

(Hagåtña) When domestic abuse interferes with child custody and family court proceedings, the decisions made in the courtroom can shape a child's safety, stability, and future. Recognizing the high stakes of these cases, the Judiciary of Guam, under the leadership of Judge Elyze M. Iriarte, has partnered with the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges' (NCJFCJ) Judicial Education Development Initiative on Domestic Violence to host a week-long, in-person training aimed at improving how Guam's justice system responds to domestic abuse and child-related matters.

The training, held the week of January 12, 2026, at the Judicial Education Center, was led by NCJFCJ faculty members Judge Nora Polk; Judge Michael Long; Maureen Reid, MSW, RSW; and Jennifer Arsenian, JD—nationally recognized experts in judicial responses to domestic violence and child welfare. The sessions are designed to equip judges, court personnel, social workers, behavioral health service providers, and other community partners serving youth with the knowledge and tools needed to identify risk, protect survivors, and prioritize the safety and well-being of children involved in family court cases. *“The sessions—from recognizing coercive control, to assessing risk in custody matters, to improving system coordination are designed to help align our responses and improve how families experience the system,”* said Chief Justice Robert J. Torres.

Participants included judicial officers, attorneys, treatment providers, social workers, and practitioners from the Superior Court of Guam's Client Services and Family Counseling Division (CSFC), the Department of Youth Affairs (DYA), the Department of Public Health and Social Services' Bureau of Social Services Administration (DPHSS BOSSA), the Guam Department of Education (GDOE), and the Guam Behavioral Health and Wellness Center's Child-Adolescent Services Division. Community-based organizations—including WestCare, Sanctuary, and Ohala Adoptions—also took part, reinforcing the importance of a coordinated, multidisciplinary response.

This training focused on strengthening judicial decision-making in cases involving domestic abuse, particularly where children are affected. By improving how courts assess risk, understand family dynamics, and collaborate with service providers, the Judiciary of Guam aims to reduce harm, prevent re-traumatization, and promote safer outcomes for families.

The issues identified during the training will guide the next phase of technical assistance, ensuring that lessons learned translate into long-term system improvements that better serve Guam's children and families.

The Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice, supported this training.

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