

November 13, 2018 — Meet Judge Pooler

A special thanks goes to Judge Pooler for sharing and spending the evening answering our questions. Before coming to dependency, Judge Pooler was in criminal court for years and then in delinquency. We are thrilled to have her in dependency!

- **What do you want to hear from the Guardian?**
 - I want to hear it all: the good, the bad and the indifferent.
 - I want to know about school, any special needs, do they have siblings -- are they placed together or do they see each other.
 - I want the Guardian to paint me a picture of the child.
 - If you have something you need to say- make it known that you wish to speak.

- **When do you want our reports and what do you look for?**
 - I read them when I get them (usually before the hearing), but “e-filing” is horrifying.
 - The GAL program will make an effort to email a copy of our reports directly to the judge now!
 - I read the Guardian report, and I look for something important that you know and for your recommendations.

- **Do you want to hear from foster parents/ caregivers?**
 - Oh yes! Foster parents/ caregivers and Guardians are the backbone of this system.
 - It is not fair for them to attend Court and not be heard.
 - It can be difficult when a pre-adoptive foster parent is present and so is the biological parent, but they have information that is important for me to know.
 - There is a form that foster parents are supposed to complete and submit to the court prior to a hearing. For many Guardians, this was the first time we heard about this form. You can ask the foster parent if they received this and completed it, and if they wish, they may send you a copy.

- **What are your pet peeves?**
 - When people are not on time. If you are going to be late, let someone know. (This goes for everyone -- attorneys, parents, etc.)
 - DO NOT INTERRUPT ME!
 - Do not interrupt each other.

- **What is your view on children attending court? What do you do when children want to speak with you privately?**
 - Children attending court makes the case real for me.
 - I like the older children to attend because it makes them feel a part of the process- I also don't want them to miss too much school.
 - I can pick up a lot about the interaction between the children and parents by observing them in Court.
 - If a child wants to speak to me privately I will ask the Guardian to join us. I will not meet with children alone.
 - When it is a teacher planning day, it would be great to have kids come to court.

- **When do you consider changing the goal of the case plan?**
 - I have been setting the first J.R. in 3 months. That way I am aware of the status of referrals for services and if the parents are attending/ participating. I don't lose 6 months to achieve permanency for a child.
 - When you realize the case plan/ parents are not workable.
- **Are you comfortable with Guardians appearing by phone?**
 - Comfortable yes, but it is not my preference.
 - I like having the Guardian attend Court, when possible.
- **How can we get our cases called so we don't spend hours waiting?**
 - If everyone necessary is present, tell my bailiff.
 - You don't have to wait if you are there for MBI -- let your attorney know you are here.
- **Do you calendar 17.3 hearings?**
 - Yes, but independent living process should really start at 16.
- **Do you send cases to mediation? Under what circumstances?**
 - Whenever the lawyers ask for it.
 - Seems to be effective because everyone feels they get to speak.
- **When do you send cases to Citizen Review Panel (CRP), and when do you keep them?**
 - I want the first JR, and I calendar it in 3 months; the next JR I send to the GM and the next to CRP.
- **Why can't Judges access the Guardian reports on Optima?**
 - Judges don't have access to Optima.
- **Why did you become a dependency judge and what do you hope to accomplish?**
 - I rotated out of criminal into delinquency. Criminal court was all about the law, and I wasn't happy in delinquency.
 - I want to learn as much as I can and to change the world, one child at a time.
- **Is there a support group for Judges?**
 - You have to find out what works for you individually.
 - We all do talk to each other.
 - Adoptions work for me!!

Final Remarks:

- The most important thing for me to know about substance abuse cases is how is it affecting the child? Are the parents able to parent?
- I am always concerned about the effect of D.V. on children. When they constantly hear yelling and screaming, it affects their sense of safety and being loved.
- In Judicial College, judges are trained in trauma-based advocacy. I would love to be more familiar with qualified service providers.