

BUILDING A TRAUMA- INFORMED COURT



WHAT IS A TRAUMA-INFORMED COURT?

- Acknowledges the prevalence and impact of trauma
- Attempts to create a sense of safety for all participants, whether or not they have a trauma-related diagnosis
- Eliminates policies and procedures that may result in participants feeling loss of control in specific situations
- Has staff who are welcoming, non-judgmental, and culturally competent
- Has a trauma-reducing physical environment

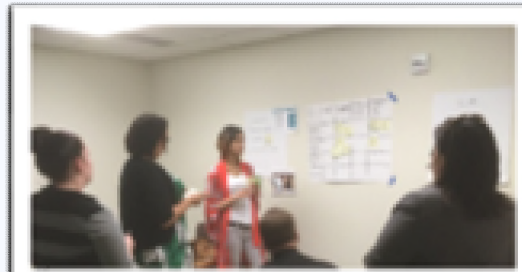
FIRST STEP:
WE LISTENED

NCJFCJ TRAUMA AUDIT

- The Court underwent a Trauma Audit from NCJFCJ beginning in October 2014
- Comprehensive assessment
- Included survey of stakeholders, focus groups and interviews, assessment of physical environment, hearing observation, judicial engagement, online stakeholder survey

OUTCOME:
17 Recommendations

HOW TO EMPOWER YOUTH AND REDUCE YOUTH TRAUMA



GENERATED IDEAS AT CHILDREN'S ROUNDTABLE



	CYF	Courts	Service Providers	Community
Background				
Technology & Digital Media				
Programs & Services				
Workload				



REVIEWED AND VOTED ON TOP IDEAS

REFINED TOP 4 IDEAS

WHAT WE HEARD:

WHAT CAUSES OR
INCREASES TRAUMA
DURING THE COURT
EXPERIENCE?

Fear of the unknown

Fear of the defendant

Fear of being judged

Waiting

Not understanding what happened

Not having an opportunity to be heard

Multiple appearances and continuances

Multiple judges and attorneys

Physical environment of the courthouse

WHAT CAUSES/INCREASES TRAUMA? GENERAL FEEDBACK FROM COURT USERS

Not knowing what
to expect

Not coming
prepared

Not knowing where
to check-in

Website not
mobile-friendly

Poor signage

No idea when the
case will be heard

WHAT CAUSES/INCREASES TRAUMA? SPECIFIC FEEDBACK FROM COURT USERS

"Courts are fine;
time is the problem."

"Can I go home? I
feel anxious."

"Those chairs are
uncomfortable.
They don't even fit."

"I don't stay in the
same place too
long; I have to move
around because it's
so boring."

"You've got to
come prepared."

"The ER has more to
do than the court
and it's faster."

"You can't hear the
announcements."

WHAT WE HEARD: COURT IS TRAUMATIC

Consider why Court Users are here

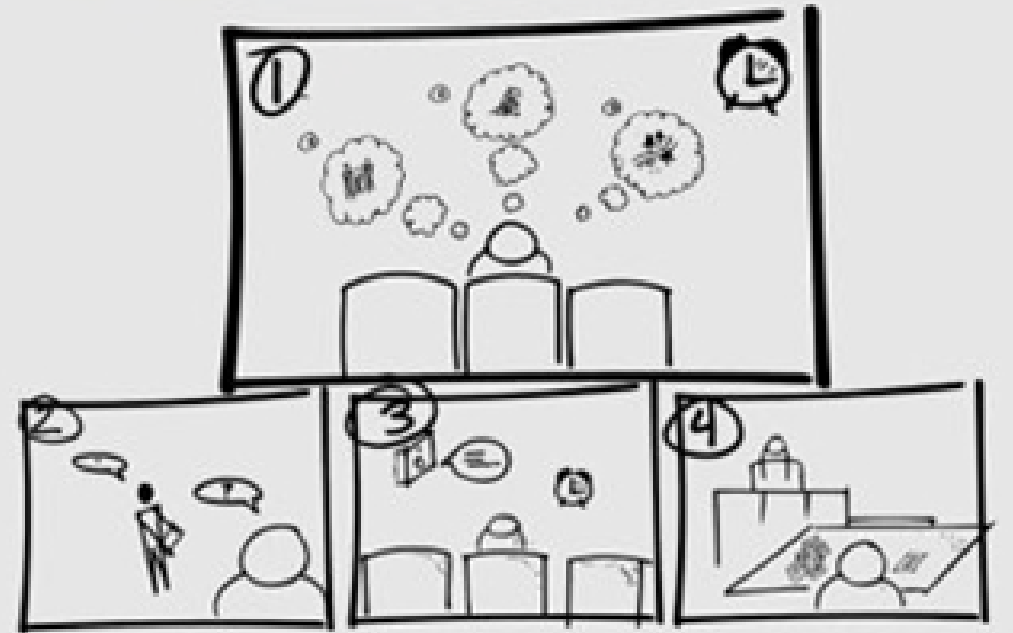
- Abused & Neglected
- Children removed
- TPR hearings
- Domestic Violence
- Arrested & Accused
- Injured
- Victim of Crime
- Divorce
- Custody
- Support
- Drug Addicted
- Neurodivergence and Mental Health Needs

WHAT DID WE NEED TO
DO TO IMPROVE?
WHAT WE HEARD:

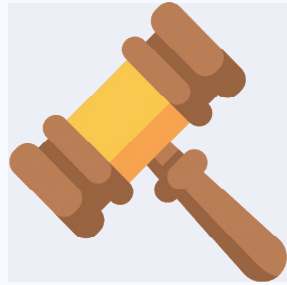
- Transparency
- Trustworthiness
- Empowerment

Scenario

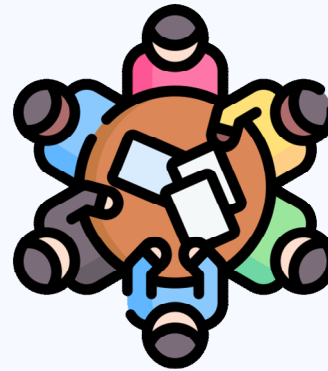
Seeing the waiting room through a point of view



SECOND STEP: COLLABORATION



THE COURT



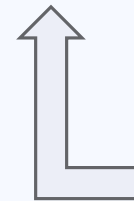
CHILDREN'S ROUNDTABLE



CARNEGIE MELLON



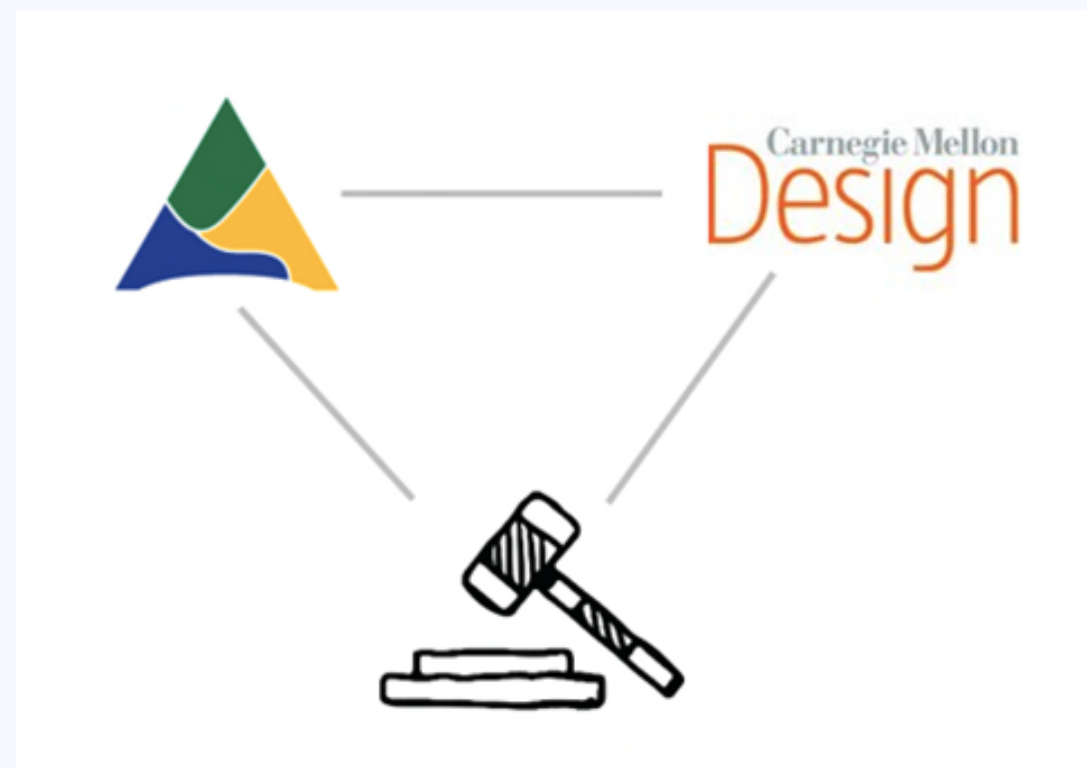
ALLEGHENY COUNTY DHS



STAKEHOLDERS

Partnership with DHS, the Court and CMU

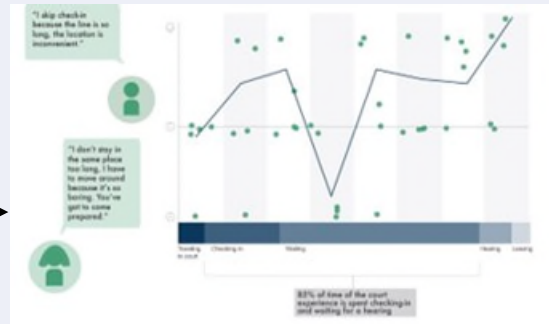
- The Court and Allegheny County DHS partnered with a Carnegie Mellon masters-level, human-centered design class.
- The students did an intensive 6-week project to redesign the court process



CMU PROCESS

USED MULTIPLE DESIGN RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

- OBSERVATION
- INTERVIEWS
- JOURNEY MAPS →
- SURVEYS
- EXAMINED EXISTING DOCUMENTS
- REVIEWED RESEARCH LITERATURE
- EVALUATED COURT WEBSITE
- REVIEWED SECONDARY RESEARCH (e.g., PARENT FOCUS GROUPS, SURVEYS, ETC)



CONNECTED WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

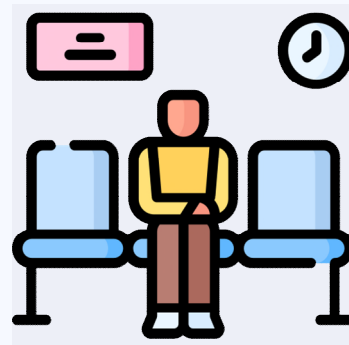
- YOUTH SUPPORT PARTNERS
- YOUTH
- FAMILIES
- ATTORNEYS
- JUDGES
- CASEWORKERS
- COURT ADMINISTRATORS



THIRD STEP: CHANGE THE SYSTEM



TECHNOLOGY



PHYSICAL SPACE



ADDED SERVICES



TRAINING

TECHNOLOGY



- Website Redesign
- Kiosk Check-In System
- Charging Stations & Outlets
- TV Screens with Movies & Case Tracking
- WiFi throughout building
- SMS Texting Notifications
- Digital Signage
- Case Tracking
- iPad tables with apps for kids
- Language Access
- Hybrid Hearings



PHYSICAL SPACE

IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL SPACE

- Safety in the physical environment creates trust
- Consider the impact of:
 - Noise and sounds
 - Trauma-informed colors
 - Where the judge sits
 - Who is in the room when a child or victim of abuse is speaking
 - Crowded waiting areas

WAITING ROOMS



COLORS, FURNITURE, TVS,
ARTWORK



PRIVATE MEETING AREAS



IPAD TABLES FOR
CHILDREN

SIGNAGE & WAYFINDING



REMOVED NEGATIVE
SIGNAGE



DYNAMIC ELECTRONIC
DIRECTORIES



INCREASED DIRECTIONAL
SIGNAGE

OTHER PHYSICAL SPACE IMPROVEMENTS



OUTDOOR PLAY AREA



UPDATED ARTWORK



DEDICATED CHILDREN'S
AREA

ADDED SERVICES

NEW SERVICES



MEDICAL CLINIC

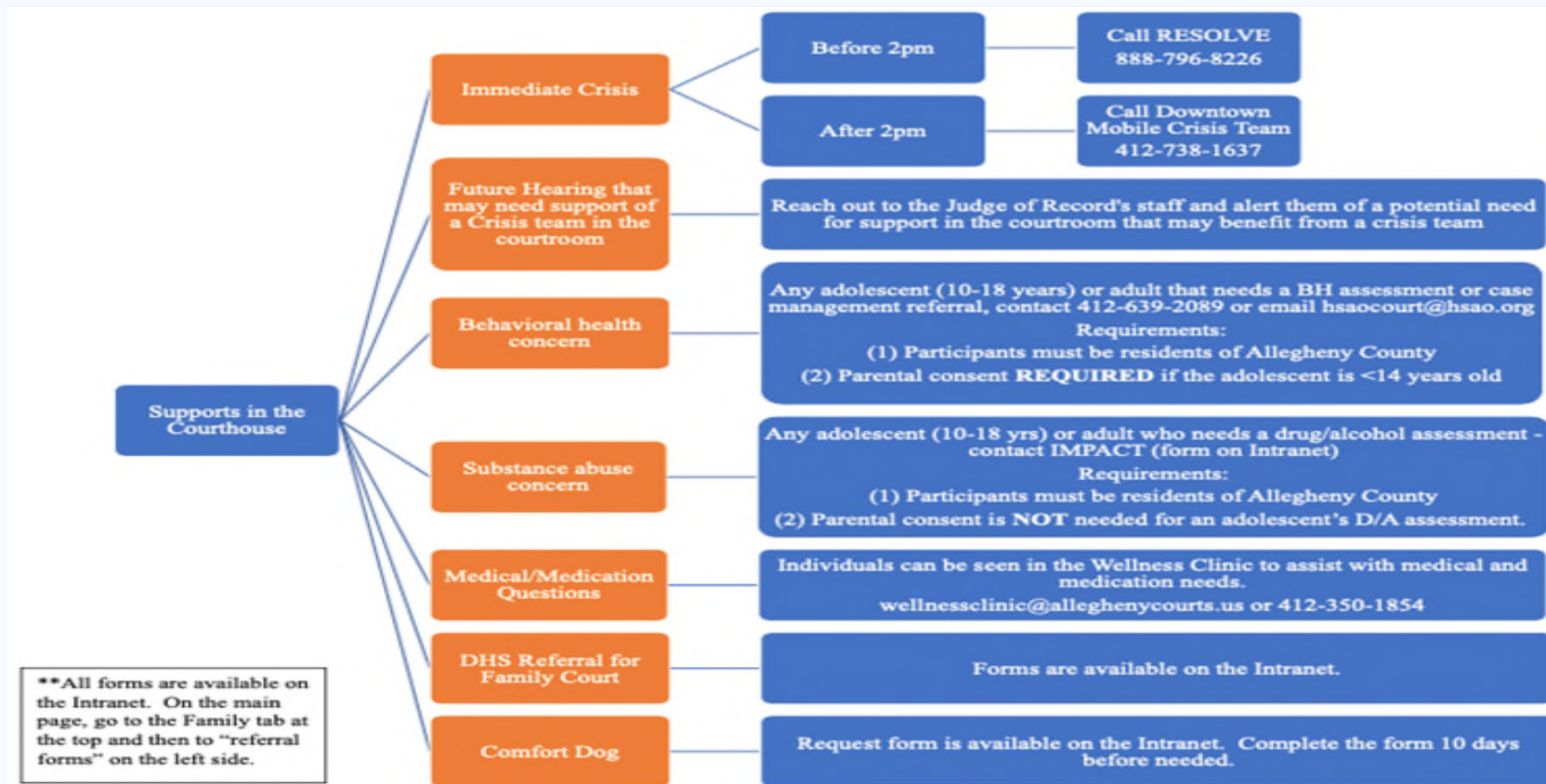


SENSORY ROOM



SUPPORTS FOR THOSE
WITH AUTISM

ADDITIONAL SERVICES



TRAINING

TRAINING FOR JUDGES, HEARING OFFICERS, ALL OTHER STAFF

- Mental Health First Aid
- Motivational interviewing
- Center for Victims Hearing Rivers Trauma-Informed Training
- Language Access
- Poverty Summit
- Case management strategies

CASE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- One Family – One Judge
- Timing is everything – delays create bad outcomes
- Custody Cases
- Dependency & Delinquency Cases
- Criminal Cases

1. We listened
2. We collaborated
3. We changed

CONCLUSION

Questions? Email me – Judge Jennifer McCrady – jmccrady@alleghenycourts.us