



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
JUDICIAL BRANCH**

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESS ADVISORY:

Juvenile Access Pilot Program Begins This Month in Middletown

The Child Protection Session at the Middlesex Judicial District Courthouse, 1 Court St., Middletown, will be the site of a new pilot program to increase access to Juvenile Court. Under this pilot, which will begin Tuesday, Feb. 16, 2010, members of the public will be able to attend previously closed juvenile trial proceedings.

Pursuant to Public Act 09-194, Chief Court Administrator Barbara M. Quinn established the pilot program in Middletown with the assistance of the Juvenile Access Pilot Program Advisory Board and the Rules Committee of the Superior Court. Judge Quinn co-chairs the board with Attorney Sarah Eagan, who serves as director of the Center for Children's Advocacy's Child Abuse Project.

The public act requires increased public access to trial proceedings in which a child is alleged to be uncared for, neglected, abused, or is the subject of a petition for termination of parental rights. All trial proceedings for these types of cases will be presumed open to the public, except as provided by the attached standing order or as otherwise provided by law. The act also authorizes the judges presiding over these proceedings to order, on a case-by-case basis and upon good cause shown, that access to all or any portion of the proceedings be denied or limited. A motion to deny or limit access can be filed by any party, guardian ad litem, witness or other interested person in accordance with the procedures set forth in the attached standing order.

(MORE)

2-2-2-2 Juvenile Access Pilot Program

Notice of any motion to close all or part of a proceeding will be posted on the Judicial Branch website whenever practicable.

Delinquency proceedings are *not* included in the pilot program. Please also note that while members of the public may attend certain cases, no cameras or audio devices will be allowed. In addition – as required by the public act adopted by the Legislature-- all juvenile court records will remain sealed from public view, including those referenced in a court proceeding open to the public.

“The advisory board has worked diligently over the past several months to set up the pilot program in accordance with the public act,” Judge Quinn said. “At the same time, we have worked very hard to balance the access rights of the public and accountability of government with the rights of the children who are in Juvenile Court – not of their own volition, but because of the actions of the adults in their lives.”

Attorney Eagan added: “The pilot program, adhering to long-held community values regarding the need for transparency and openness in courts, seeks to shed much-needed light on our child protection system in a manner that is sensitive to maintaining the dignity of families and children.”

As required by the public act, the advisory board will monitor the Judicial Branch’s progress in implementing the pilot program. The board will survey participants and submit recommendations to the Judicial Branch and the Legislature by Dec. 31, 2010. A list of all board members, their titles, and agendas and minutes from their meetings may be accessed through the following URL: http://www.jud.ct.gov/Committees/juv_access/default.htm

For information, please contact the External Affairs Division at 860-757-2270.

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