



PRESS RELEASE

**New York State
Unified Court System**

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Date: December 3, 2008

Chief Judge Announces Opening of New York State's First *Teen Space* *Teen Resource Center to be Located in Queens County Family Courthouse*

NEW YORK – Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye today announced the opening of New York State's first *Teen Space* – a designated, supervised area in the Queens County Family Courthouse that will be a hub of resources for youth prior to and after their permanency hearings. The newly unveiled space is designed to engage youth in the court process and provide age-appropriate resources to make their court experiences more meaningful.

The development of *Teen Space* is the result of years of work aimed at encouraging and supporting youth participation in permanency hearings. In 2005, the New York City Family Court brought together a citywide work group to address issues unique to the growing number of adolescents in out-of-home care. The group recommended the development of a "resource room with information" to serve as a waiting area which would make the court more user friendly and encourage more youth to participate in their court hearings. In 2006, the Pew Commission's Home at Last Project, in collaboration with Fordham's Interdisciplinary Centers, sponsored the New York City Youth Summit.

Focused on engaging youth in Family Court proceedings, the recommendations of the 40 youth and 100 adult attendees included the development of teen centers in each courthouse. The Youth Justice Board – established by the Center for Court Innovation and focused on permanency issues and how to make the court experience more significant for youth in care – echoed this recommendation, which in turn was enthusiastically endorsed by New York City Family Court Administrative Judge Joseph Lauria.

The Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children, under the leadership of Chief Judge Kaye and with its expertise in the development of the children’s centers in Family Courts across the state, has spearheaded the effort to make these court-based resource waiting areas a reality for teens attending their permanency hearings. The commission, with a grant from the Heckscher Foundation for Children and in collaboration with the Youth Justice Board, Judge Lauria and Supervising Judge of the Queens Family Court Edwina Richardson-Mendelson, developed the *Teen Space* model in Queens County Family Court.

Chief Judge Kaye said, “The idea of giving children a voice in their permanency plans – once discouraged and deemed unnecessary and potentially even damaging – is now widely recognized as incredibly important. Indeed, the law now requires that judges consult with children in an age-appropriate manner at all permanency hearings. *Teen Space* will offer these young people a long overdue and woefully needed safe space to call their own within the courthouse. I’m extremely grateful to all our partners for their contributions to the creation of *Teen Space* and on behalf of New York’s youth.”

“*Teen Space* will provide teens involved in Family Court hearings with a place to relax, study or do school work prior to their court appearances,” Kathleen DeCataldo, Executive Director of the commission said. “This designated, supervised waiting room will include resources to assist youth in preparing for their court hearings, provide information that is helpful in their everyday lives and aid in their transition to adulthood.”

Judge Richardson-Mendelson added, “*Teen Space* creates an empowering atmosphere for youth who already attend their court hearings and also encourages those who currently do not attend their hearings to come to court. We are confident that *Teen Space* will be a useful resource for the more than 1,000 youth living in foster care who currently have cases pending in Queens Family Court.”

Teen Space will expand to Erie, Monroe and Dutchess Counties in 2009.