



PRESS RELEASE

**New York State
Unified Court System**

**Hon. Joseph A. Zayas
Chief Administrative Judge**

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Statewide Coordinating Judge for Family Court Matters Named

NEW YORK—Chief Administrative Judge Joseph A. Zayas and First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Norman St. George today announced the appointment of Hon. Richard Rivera as Statewide Coordinating Judge for Family Court Matters. The creation of this new position reflects the Unified Court System’s renewed commitment to ensuring that New York’s family courts—which hear a range of sensitive matters involving children and families, including child neglect, adoption, juvenile delinquency, paternity, domestic violence and child custody, visitation and support, in each of the State’s 62 counties—function efficiently, equitably and compassionately. To this end, Judge Rivera will be responsible for advocating for increased Family Court resources; developing and implementing best practices to promote access to equal justice for children and families who appear in Family Court—and who are disproportionately low-income New Yorkers and people of color; devising services and programs to promote the well-being of Family Court judges and non-judicial personnel; developing training and educational opportunities for Family Court judges and non-judicial personnel on recurring or novel issues presented in Family Court, including coordinating with the New York State Judicial Institute on judicial education programs; and serving as a liaison between the court system and partner agencies, bar associations and other stakeholders. Judge Rivera will also be responsible for continuing to address the operational and other issues impacting the Family Courts that were raised in the Franklin H. Williams Commission’s 2022 Report on New York City Family Courts.

Judge Rivera will work under the supervision of Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Justice Initiatives Edwina G. Richardson-Mendelson and the courts’ Office for Justice Initiatives’ Division of Child Welfare and Family Justice on policy development and strategy. He will report to Deputy Chief Administrative Judges Deborah Kaplan (New York City Courts) and James P. Murphy (Courts Outside New York City) on Family Court operations.

“Our family courts handle some of the most emotional, gut-wrenching and time-sensitive matters, serving some of our most vulnerable New Yorkers. Having spent much of his career working in the family court system, both as a judge and in various other capacities—including advocating on behalf of children and families in crisis—Judge Rivera has a deep understanding of the myriad problems facing this vulnerable population and the critical issues that our Family Court judges and non-judicial personnel grapple with daily. He is a fair and dedicated judge, a leader and role model who, as demonstrated throughout his Family Court tenure, possesses the skills, knowledge and sensitivity to assume this critical position,” said Chief Administrative Judge Zayas. “I look forward to working with him in his new capacity as we seek to bring about much-needed case management, technological and other enhancements to improve case outcomes for our Family Court litigants and more effectively support the vital work of our Family Court judges and non-judicial personnel.”

“Judge Rivera is a leader and innovator whose knowledge of—and passion for—family law, coupled with his experience working in the family court system in a variety of capacities, distinguish him as a candidate for this vital, statewide administrative post. I am eager to work with him and the court system’s leadership team to implement Family Court best practices that will lead to improved case outcomes, help eliminate racial and other systemic inequities, and make for a better courtroom environment for all who work in and appear before New York’s family courts,” said First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge St. George.

“I am deeply pleased that Judge Rivera will serve as our inaugural Statewide Coordinating Judge for Family Court Matters. Judge Rivera’s many years of distinguished service to the families and communities of New York State as an advocate, Support Magistrate, Family Court Judge and Supervising Family Court Judge make him particularly well-equipped for this highly important new leadership role in our courts. It will be my true honor and privilege to work closely with him in his new position,” said Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Richardson-Mendelson.

“I am truly honored and humbled to have been selected for this inaugural—and pivotal—administrative post. I am grateful for this important opportunity to work with Chief Administrative Judge Zayas, First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge St. George, our Deputy Chief Administrative Judges, Administrative Judges, Supervising Judges, Family Court Judges and non-judicial personnel, along with the court system’s partner agencies and other stakeholders, in our efforts to ensure the efficient, effective and fair functioning of New York’s family court system,” said Judge Rivera.

Since January 2022, Judge Rivera has served as Supervising Family Court Judge in the Third Judicial District, which serves New York’s Capital Region—the first person of color to hold that position. He was elected to Family Court in Albany County in 2014, becoming the first person of color elected to a countywide bench and the first Latino elected to any bench in the Third Judicial District. He was later appointed to preside over the Court’s newly created Domestic Violence Part. Prior to his ascension to the Family Court bench, he served the Court in several capacities, including as staff counsel for the Albany Law School Family Violence Clinic, representing domestic violence survivors; as an Attorney for the Children in both Albany and Rensselaer counties; as an Assistant County Attorney, prosecuting juvenile delinquents and PINS (Persons in Need of Supervision); and as a Support Magistrate. He began his legal

career as an associate counsel for the Law Office of Gaspar M. Castillo, Esq., where he represented litigants in city and town courts, handling criminal matters, traffic violations and appeals. He is a graduate of Colgate University and Albany Law School.

Judge Rivera is a co-chair of the Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission, established to develop programs to improve the perception of fairness within the court system and ensure equal justice in New York State.

Judge Rivera's appointment is effective immediately.

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