



DJJ'S Resident Advocacy Program will effectively respond to the needs and concerns of the agency's juvenile residents.

DJJ Announces Members of Resident Advocacy Program Committee

In July 2008 the Agency launched Directive # 07/08, the Resident Advocacy Program (RAP). This new program will promote accountability and effectiveness, protect residents' confidentiality and enhance data quality. RAP will also enhance the ability of the Ombudsman and the Department to respond to trends and improve problem solving.

In September 2008, Commissioner Neil Hernandez extended five invitations to potential Resident Advocacy Program Committee (RAPC) members to serve for a one-year term. Those individuals accepted their invitation and will attend monthly meetings with the Ombudsman, Executive Directors of all three secure detention facilities, and the Commissioner. The Department's Ombudspeople will prepare and discuss detailed reports during the RAP meetings. In addition, recommendations for policy-level decisions made at the Agency and trends will be discussed.

Commissioner Hernandez welcomed the addition of these volunteers to the service of our youth, stating "This group of New Yorkers that has agreed to volunteer its time will provide an unparalleled commitment to children and recognized expertise to make sure the Department's juvenile resident grievance program meets its aspirations."

The RAPC members are (As of October 2009):

Rev. Annie M. Bovian is the Executive Director of Women's Advocate Ministry, Inc., a crisis intervention program for incarcerated women and their children. She is a graduate of Harvard University School of Divinity and a former Adjunct Professor at Drew University as well as a Lecturer at Fordham University.

Rev. Mark Hallinan, S.J., is the Assistant for Social Ministries to the Provincial of the New York Province of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). As Assistant for Social Ministries, Rev. Hallinan serves as the Province Liaison to groups involved in issues of social justice and assists the sponsored works of the Province in its effort to educate and engage individuals on current issues of social concern. Previously, he served as Associate Pastor at the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola in Manhattan. Rev. Hallinan has a M.Div. from the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley and an M.A. in Medieval History from Fordham University.

Honorable Joseph M. Lauria recently retired as the Administrative Judge for New York City Family Court, and is currently working as a consultant to the Center for Court Innovation. Judge Lauria has served children and families in the Family Court since 1989 when he was appointed by Mayor Edward I. Koch. Judge Lauria joined the Resident Advocacy Program Committee in March 2009.

Victoria Sammartino is Executive Director of Voices UnBroken. Voices UnBroken was founded in 2000 by Ms. Sammartino, a poet and Bronx native, based on a belief that the place for poetry and creative self-expression is everywhere. Voices UnBroken is a community-based organization dedicated to providing under-heard members of the community with the tools and opportunity for compelling self-expression. Through creative writing workshops in jails, prisons, group homes, residential treatment facilities and various other transitional and alternative settings, Voices UnBroken nurtures the inherent need in all people to tell their stories.

Sheila Scharfman is a Mental Health Counselor at Sanctuary for Families where she counsels child victims/witnesses of domestic violence. The Children's Program at Sanctuary is one of the leading programs in New York State devoted to the emotional needs of children enmeshed in domestic violence, and is located in the NYC Queens Family Justice Center. Sheila has prior experience in the City's Juvenile Justice System, and holds a Juris Doctorate from Fordham University and a Masters Degree from Pace University.

Euphemia Strauch holds a Masters Degree in Social Work and is the Executive Director of Families on the Move of NYC, Inc. She has worked with families of children and youth who have special needs and involvement in the Juvenile Justice System in New York City for 13 years. Euphemia is currently an advocate for families on several committees, councils and task forces on local, state and national levels.

For additional information on the program's operation, visit the DJJ website at: www.nyc.gov/djj under "Detention Service" you will find the "Resident Advocacy Program."

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