

## NEWS RELEASE

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### Philadelphia Family Court Pilot Program Addresses teen-age drug offenders

**PHILADELPHIA, Jan. 10, 2005** — Who's taking care of the children?

With more than half of the juveniles adjudicated to Philadelphia Common Pleas Court admitting drug use — and treatment providers reporting that most juveniles who enter treatment rarely complete it — the Family Court division decided to take action.

In September 2004, the First Judicial District's Juvenile Treatment Court opened at 1801 Vine St., and the first group of participants is now moving to the final phase of the program.

“We needed to do something,” said Judge Myrna Field, Administrative Judge of Family Court and presiding judge of the new Juvenile Treatment Court. “So many of the juveniles entering the system admit to drug use but treatment providers tell us ‘virtually no juvenile’ finishes a treatment program. The juveniles have no parents on record to encourage them to attend treatment – to encourage them to go to school and do the work. Through collaboration with the city Health Department, the Philadelphia School District, the public defenders, the district attorney's office and others, we were able to start the Juvenile Treatment Court.”

Juveniles entering the program are assigned case managers who monitor their participation in treatment and other mandated services. If the juveniles do not follow the treatment plan, there are sanctions.

“The Juvenile Treatment Court represents a collaborative effort among several groups, all having a commitment to improving the lives of citizens who come into contact with the Criminal Justice System,” said Dr. Arthur C. Evans, Director of the Office of Behavioral Health and Mental Retardation Services. “The Office of Behavioral Health has participated in the planning of this effort from the beginning and is providing clinical assessments, family therapy, case management and substance abuse treatment for juveniles who are under the auspices of the court.

“All of those involved believe that the services provided and the commitment of those involved will be instrumental in impacting in a positive way on the lives of many young people.”

(MORE)

The program is being piloted in West Philadelphia. Court intake officers, working with the district attorney, review the cases of juveniles entering the system who are charged with felony drug charges.

After being assessed and meeting with an attorney, a juvenile who meets the criteria and chooses to enter the program, is placed on the Treatment Court calendar and appears before Judge Field, who monitors compliance with the program.

These juveniles participate in intensive outpatient drug treatment programs, and their school attendance, grades, drug tests and attitude are all reviewed regularly by the Treatment Court judge. The requirements become less strict as the juvenile progresses successfully through the three-phase program.

There are currently 16 juveniles participating in Treatment Court.

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