



PRESS RELEASE

**New York State
Unified Court System
Hon. Jonathan Lippman
Chief Administrative Judge**

**Contact:
David Bookstaver or Mai Yee
(212) 428-2500
www.nycourts.gov/press**

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Needy Families Get Free Legal Advice from Law Firm Attorneys
New Initiative in Brooklyn Family Court Connects Self-Represented Litigants with Pro Bono Legal Expertise

BROOKLYN—With the opening of the Self-Represented Legal Services Project at Brooklyn Family Court, for the first time in New York State, low-income litigants in Family Court who do not have an attorney will be able to obtain free legal advice from pro bono attorneys right in the courthouse. Attorneys from local New York City law firms and corporations, who have completed special training provided by the court system, will conduct free on-the-spot consultations with families in need of legal services who cannot afford to pay for them. This is an initiative of the Hon. Joseph M. Lauria, Administrative Judge of the New York City Family Court, in collaboration with the Honorable Juanita Bing Newton, Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Justice Initiatives. The project furthers the goal of Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye of providing valuable legal services to court users who are unable to afford attorneys by partnering with the city's major law firms and corporations.

“The matters decided in Family Court have far-reaching consequences on the lives of the families and children involved, yet so many of these parties appear without the benefit of basic legal advice because they cannot afford a lawyer,” said Chief Judge Kaye. “This innovative private-public partnership will provide a sorely needed service by offering indigent families individualized legal expertise when otherwise they would have had none. I thank Judges Lauria and Newton for spearheading this valuable initiative and the private sector companies that are

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participating for assisting their fellow New Yorkers in this very meaningful way.”

Judge Lauria noted, “The New York City Family Court is delighted to be the first in the state to provide this service to our most needy litigants through this unique partnership with the talented and dedicated attorneys from our leading law firms and corporations.”

The project will be supervised by a full-time court attorney, who is available five days a week to provide general court information to litigants starting this month. Beginning November 2, 2006, pro bono attorneys will be on site Tuesdays and Thursdays to provide legal advice to families involved in child support, paternity and guardianship cases. Assistance with other types of cases (beyond child support, paternity and guardianship) will be offered after the initial six months. Several New York City law firms and corporations are assisting in this new initiative by offering the services of their legal staff. The law firm of Greenberg Traurig, LLP, has taken a leadership role in this project, with attorneys from Citigroup; Strook & Strook & Lavan LLP; Reed Smith LLP; Dechert LLP, and Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe also participating.

The Self-Represented Legal Services Project will begin as a pilot in Brooklyn and is expected to then expand to other boroughs.

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