



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

M. JODI RELL  
GOVERNOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
September 30, 2007

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**With 14-Year Old *Emily J.* Lawsuit Successfully Completed, Governor Rell Calls For Continued Collaboration To Help Court-Involved Children**

**Community Services Result In 72 Percent of Children  
Avoiding Residential Placement**

Governor M. Jodi Rell praised a collaboration between the Judicial Branch and the Department of Children and Families (DCF) for successfully bringing to a close the 14-year-old *Emily J.* lawsuit that resulted in increased community based services for court-involved children.

Governor Rell and Acting Chief Court Administrator Barbara Quinn said today that the success of a two-year collaboration between DCF and the Judicial Branch makes it essential for the State to continue providing court-involved children with community-based services that can avoid unnecessary placements into residential programs.

The call for continuing the joint effort of DCF and the Judicial Branch comes the same day that a federal court ordered closed the *Emily J.* settlement agreement. The settlement, reached in 2005, was the ultimate culmination of legal action taken in 1993 on behalf of children placed in Judicial Branch detention centers. That settlement established a number of community-based services statewide and was terminated today based upon the State having met its obligations.

The settlement in its second year resulted in the development of over \$6 million in community based treatment services for court-involved children. As a result, 72 percent of participating children were diverted from a residential placement. DCF social workers and Juvenile Probation Officers meet together and with families to identify the services and supervision needed for children to successfully remain in the community instead of going to costly residential treatment programs.

“Community-based and in-home services work,” Governor Rell said. “We have shown that nearly three quarters of the children can be served without taking them away from their communities, from their families, and their schools. We must stay on this

course of offering treatment services and strengthening the families of these children. This is an effective and efficient way to get children and their families back on track.”

Judge Christine Keller, Chief Administrative Judge For Juvenile Matters, said the two-year collaboration demonstrates that community based services are effective over sustained periods, noting that two-thirds of the children remained in the community successfully for at least six months.

“This offers us a road map for supporting children and their families in the community over the long run,” Judge Keller said. “We know that even children placed into a residential setting will be returning to their community eventually. It is simply smart for us to build in the community supports early on.”

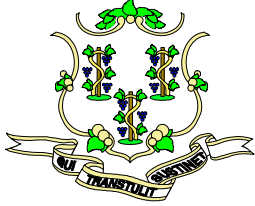
Judge Keller added: “The judicial branch will continue to work closely with DCF, other agencies and advocates to insure children get the help they need and do not languish in temporary shelters, emergency rooms, detention centers or adult prisons. We must continue to expand therapeutic, community-based services that are effective in assisting families, foster parents and group home providers. Access to inpatient psychiatric care and structured residential placements must also improve so that children with acute needs receive appropriate treatment.”

The Governor and Judge Quinn are endorsing a new agreement reached last month between DCF and the Judicial Branch to continue the collaboration and community-based services beyond the term of the original settlement agreement. DCF and the Judicial Branch will continue to convene teams of staff to identify and divert children from a residential placement by providing community based services. The services include in-home substance abuse treatment, and counseling that helps families build stronger relationships and make parents more effective in managing the behaviors of their children. Other services include mentoring, educational support, therapeutic group homes, and therapeutic foster care.

The Governor noted that this development coincides with a major shift in the way the State responds to children and families receiving a judicial designation as a “Family With Service Needs” or “FWSN”. Typically children who are truant, runaways or experience other behavior problems can be referred to Juvenile Court under a FWSN petition. Historically, some of these children have ended up in detention for violating court orders or continuing their FWSN behaviors. Under a law enacted in 2006 and effective October 1, 2007, these children can no longer be placed into a detention center for continued FWSN behavior unless they have also committed a delinquent act.. That means that DCF and the Judicial Branch will need to serve these children and their families in a timely manner in their communities and homes.

“The work between the two branches of government shows that we are ready to rise to this challenge and offer effective community based services in a timely manner,” Governor Rell said. “We are clearly prepared for this fundamental change in how we provide services to at-risk children and their families.”

DCF Commissioner Susan Hamilton said the experience of working in close collaboration with the Judicial Branch reinforces the importance for agencies to focus on the needs of children and families and not let obstacles distract from the goal of improving outcomes for children.



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“By looking over the bureaucratic walls and focusing on what individual children and families need, we can implement proven and effective programs that make a real difference,” Commissioner Hamilton said. “I want to thank the Judicial Branch for being a great partner in this effort to help children and families where and when they need it most. This bodes well for the progress of the juvenile justice system overall. There are many players in this complicated system, and we must work together to provide timely access to appropriate services in order to meet the needs of the children and families we collectively serve.”

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