



## **MONDAY MORNING MEMO**

Monday, April 30, 2007 ☞ Volume 2, Issue 7

### ***Law Day 2007 in New York State***

Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye will address a gathering at the Court of Appeals in Albany today at noon to celebrate Law Day 2007. The annual event commemorates the contributions of citizens, lawyers and judges and provides an opportunity to reflect on our legal heritage, the role of the law, and on the rights and duties which form the foundation of justice and peace in this country.

The day was instituted in the late 1950s by the American Bar Association to draw attention to both the principles and practice of law and justice, and was established as May 1<sup>st</sup> by President Dwight D. Eisenhower by proclamation in 1958 and by Congressional resolution in 1961. May 1 remains the official date, but Bar Associations across the state will be holding events commemorating the day throughout the week.

Judge Kaye is expected to speak today on the connection between judicial compensation and judicial independence. For more information, visit the NYS court system's website at [www.nycourts.gov](http://www.nycourts.gov) or the NYS Bar Association's site, [www.nysba.org](http://www.nysba.org).

### ***Navigating Transitions: What the Research Shows***

While vacationing in Scotland where my daughter is studying this year, I was honored to be able to participate in "Transforming Transitions," an international cross-systems conference. The first of its kind in the United Kingdom, the conference was held in Glasgow and drew attendees from 29 countries. The goal of the event was to promote a new interdisciplinary field of research where significant life transitions are not treated in isolation. Thus policy makers, service providers, researchers, academics and individuals can benefit from the work done by colleagues in other areas. I was there representing a women and children's shelter on whose board I serve.

Research presented at the conference ranged from work on cultural and political transitions, disabilities, attachment, divorce, drug and offender treatment, illness and developmental stages. Much of the conference centered on transitions in educational settings.

Some common themes are transitions emerged:

**1) Don't frame a transition as a problem.** Transitions are regular occurrences in life, and each one brings both stress and strength. Focusing on the positive aspects helps to build resiliency. A series of changes in someone's life builds "transitions capital" which helps to increase the capacity to withstand bigger and more challenging transitions in the future. Certainly in CASA's work we would never minimize the potentially negative impact of frequent transitions in foster care or school placements; but when those do occur, a focus on how to make best use of the transition can be helpful.

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Sometimes the skills children develop in transition may look more like rebellion than the process of resilience. Transitional coping is focused on individual and not community norms, so be wary of applying expectations or negatively labeling behavior that may be assisting children with changes they are undergoing.

**2) How participation is managed is a primary factor.** Participation in the transition process creates a sense of control that is vital in assessing whether the transition is viewed by an individual as something done to, for or with him or her. This speaks to CASA's work as well; by asking children how they are, by giving them a voice, they feel less at the mercy of the circumstances that landed them in care.

**3) Focus on where you've been not just where you're going.** The tendency when people talk about transitions is to look at where or what someone is transitioning towards. Several of the presenters stressed that it can be more helpful to look at where individuals have been, and what skills they gained from prior experiences, for keys to what will best serve them during the transition.

**4) Community is helpful to managing transitions.** Much of the research presented showed that individuals need a community to provide a stable base from which to adapt to change and to protect their rights when necessary. I was able to share some of the work in New York State in developing youth and parent advocacy groups to provide broader frameworks of community for families involved in the child welfare system. Where there is not a natural community, those supporting an individual in transition should look for ways to foster a sense of belonging among those with whom the individual interacts.

**5) A single individual can be key.** Particularly where larger supportive communities are not present, a single individual can make a considerable difference in how someone, particularly a child, experiences a transition and whether or not they build strengths or suffer deficits because of it. But of course, this is old news to CASA!

**6) Organizational humility is vital.** When systems by virtue of their mission require transitions of people, those entities must be open to change themselves based on feedback from their constituencies. As one presenter said, "This requires a tolerance of messiness and an absence of ego that is often not the norm for most organizations." In other words, agencies must model an approach of openness and optimism regarding change if they seek those qualities in the individuals they serve.

If you are interested in more information about this conference and future cross-systems transitions efforts, feel free to contact me at [daward@courts.state.ny.us](mailto:daward@courts.state.ny.us)

### ***Training Builds Skills in Facilitating LGBTQ Discussions***

The Hudson Valley Chapter of the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN) sponsored a seminar in April to provide trainers with tools and resources to facilitate discussions on issues relating to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth. Linda Burns, CASA Director for Fulton/Montgomery Counties; Mary Ann Smith, a volunteer with that program; and Darlene Ward from the NYS UCS CASA Assistance Program attended.



## **CASA ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

OFFICE OF ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND COURT IMPROVEMENT

Linda, Darlene and Rob Conlon, director the state’s Children’s Centers Programs and a Hudson Valley GLSEN board member, will be working together to develop a CASA volunteer in-service on this topic. Other individuals interested in helping to craft the in-service or bringing it to their county, please contact Darlene at [daward@courts.state.ny.us](mailto:daward@courts.state.ny.us) .

We will be pulling together some of the resources shared at the training, but in the interim feel free to visit GLSEN’s website at [www.GLSEN.org](http://www.GLSEN.org) for an excellent overview of resources, or the website for “Being Gay is OK,” an excellent site for LGBTQ youth, at [www.bgiok.org.uk/](http://www.bgiok.org.uk/) .

One quick tip to share: When communicating with children, youth or adults on your caseloads, make no assumptions about heterosexuality. Comments can be overt such as “Do you have a boyfriend?” or more subtle, but all may be heard as a bias. Using gender-neutral language such as “partner” helps open the lines of communication and creates a safe place for all types of family and support systems.

### ***National Crime Victim’s Rights Week Ceremonies Held***

The last week of April was celebrated nationwide as National Crime Victims’ Rights Week. **Marcia McGaughey** was honored at a ceremony in Genesee County for her work with the CASA program there and as part of community coalitions devoted to helping child victims of crime.

Each April since 1981, the federal Office of Office of Victims of Crime within the Department of Justice has helped lead communities throughout the country in their observances of National Crime Victims’ Rights Week. Rallies, candlelight vigils, and a host of commemorative activities are held each year to promote victims’ rights and to honor crime victims and those who advocate on their behalf. This year, many celebrations honored the victims of the violence at Virginia Tech. For more information, visit OVC’s website at [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/) .

## **Resources**

### ***Educational Court Website Developed for Youth***

The state Office of Court Administration will launch a youth-focused, educational website as part of the Law Day celebration at the state Court of Appeals. In a statement, Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye said: "I am delighted to present this new major Web initiative for and about youth. This is an important development in our work to provide young people greater access to the state's judiciary. The Web site will help them develop a commitment to civic engagement and a fundamental understanding of their rights and responsibilities within the court system."

The site will also serve as a clearinghouse for information on statewide and local youth-oriented activities ranging from mentoring and internship programs, essay and art competitions to the Center for Court Innovation's Youth Justice Board and Youth Court programs. The court system met with young people throughout April to gather their advice and input about the site’s content, structure and accessibility.



Judge Kaye said. “We believe that this exciting new website will be inspiring, satisfying and rewarding for all concerned. After all, it’s not just the future of our young people, it’s our future too.”

A link to the Web site will be available April 30 at [www.nycourts.gov/whatsnew](http://www.nycourts.gov/whatsnew).

~~~~~ **The A-Train** ~~~~~

***Citizen’s Coalition Conference May 10-12***

The New York State Citizen’s Coalition for Children Conference will be held in Albany May 10-12. Titled “Making Dreams Come True,” the conference will feature keynote presentations by:

- Joseph Crumbley, co-author of *Relatives Raising Children: An Overview of Kinship Care*;
- Gregory Keck, founder of the Attachment and Bonding Center of Ohio; and
- Barry Chaffkin, founder and CEO of Changing the World One Child and a Time.

The conference will include presentations on supporting children with disabilities, attachment issues, working effectively with the LGBTQ community, fostering resiliency, and improving outcomes for children in family court. For registration and more information, go to [www.nysccc.org](http://www.nysccc.org).

Incorporated in 1975, the Coalition is an organization of concerned citizens and nearly 150 volunteer adoptive and foster parents throughout the state devoted to: improving services to children at risk of or in out of home care; increasing citizen involvement in service planning and delivery; providing great public accountability of the NYS Office of Children and Family Services and other systems involved in child welfare; and representing the citizen’s viewpoint in advocating for improved adoption and foster care services.

~~~~~ **Quote of the Week** ~~~~~

“Many of life’s failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.”

*-- Thomas A. Edison*

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*For further information, contact:*

**Darlene Ward, Program Manager**

**98 Niver Street, Cohoes, New York 12047**

**Phone: (518) 238-4360; Fax: (518) 238-2951**

**Email: [daward@courts.state.ny.us](mailto:daward@courts.state.ny.us) / Website: [www.nycourts.gov/ip/casa/](http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/casa/)**