

October 4, 2004

Contact: Leah Gurowitz
202/879-1700

PRESS RELEASE

Partnering for Children's Mental Health

3rd DC Family Court Training Unites Attorneys, Judges, Agencies and Families

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The 3rd Annual District of Columbia Family Court Training, held at the new Washington Convention Center today, focused on “Family Court Partnerships: Supporting the Emotional Well-Being and Mental Health of Children, Youth and Families.” The interdisciplinary “cross training” brought together judges, attorneys, social workers, agency advocates and families to educate and collaborate on pressing issues of mental health.

Children, youth and families involved in the Family Court are at a higher-than-average risk for mental disorders.

“This training is helpful for all involved, but the most important beneficiaries are the children and families of the District of Columbia,” said Judge Lee F. Satterfield, Presiding Judge of the Family Court. “I am impressed with the program that Magistrate Judge Carol Ann Dalton has put together for this year. Mental health is a critical component to ensuring a happy and healthy life for children and adults before the Family Court.”

Dr. John Fairbank, the keynote speaker for the event, is the Co-Director of the National Center for Child Traumatic Stress and Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Duke University Medical Center. His remarks focused on the “Impact of Trauma on the Mental Health of Children and Youth.”

A series of sessions took place throughout the day, including “Early Identification and Diagnosis of Mental Illness and Behavior Disorders” with panels on depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, autism and child development in the morning and “Mental Health Services & Supports: Exploring the Continuum of Care” with panels on substance abuse, psychotropic medication and support systems in the afternoon.

Lunchtime entertainment was presented by Christopher Irby, performing “D.C. Rap” and VAMP, an organization that does dance therapy with Oak Hill, performing dance and mime. An art exhibit was held in the lobby featuring artwork designed by children in D.C. Public Schools, Oak Hill and Sail Charter.

The District of Columbia Courts sponsored the training in partnership with the Department of Mental Health and for the first time, Georgetown University. The D.C. Courts are the first Family Court Interdisciplinary Training

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Model Family Court to partner with a university. This partnership is especially fruitful as it allows the Family Court to receive technical assistance in cases in which mental health is a factor.

The conference is the D.C. Family Court's third annual interdisciplinary "cross-training" for judges, attorneys, social workers and agency advocates involved in the Family Court process. Foster parents and children, the "stakeholders" in these cases, participated in panels and sessions throughout the training. The success of this training in past years can be measured by the attendance, which has averaged over 250 with a waiting list since the first year.

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