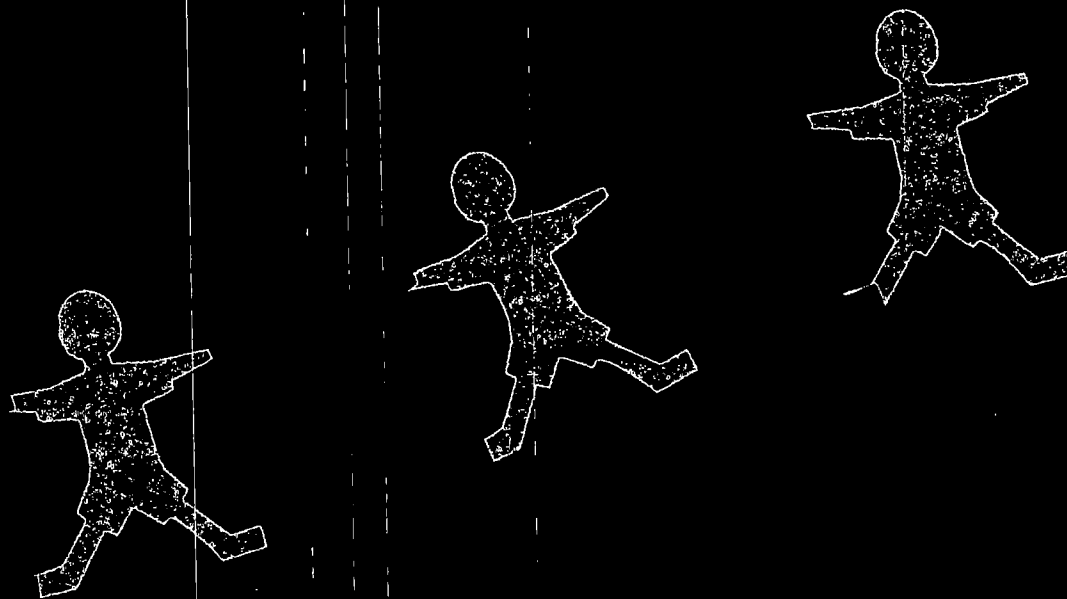
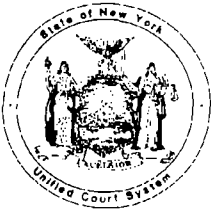


A Guide to Starting,
Building and Operating
Children's Centers for
New York's Courts

A Good Place For Children



New York State Permanent
Judicial Commission on Justice
for Children



**PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION
ON JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN**

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July 25, 1997

Ms. Jennifer Klein
Senior Policy Analyst
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Jennifer,

It was good to see you at the Kellogg meeting.

As promised, I have sent under separate cover materials about New York's statewide system of Children's Centers in the Courts.

This Commission created the Children's Centers to provide a two-prong service: quality drop-in child care to enable caregivers to attend to court business, to provide a safe haven for children and to facilitate efficient court operations; and a site-- possibly the only place until a child enters school-- where families can learn about and gain access to services vital for their child's development such as WIC, Early Intervention and Head Start. Fourteen Centers (there will be 22 by the end of 1997) served over 36,000 children last year. Through special projects with Head Start (the nation's only collaboration between Head Start and the courts), the New York Children's Health Project and the presence of trained Center staff, thousands of families have received information and referral about essential services and over 1500 children have been enrolled in Head Start, WIC and Early Intervention or received immunizations and other health services.

The Children's Centers initiative illustrates three themes for comprehensive national child care policy. First, it is important to recognize and support a wide variety of quality early childhood programs --day care centers, family day care, early intervention, Head Start, and drop-in child care in the courts, hospitals or other institutions. Second, quality child care that addresses the needs of parents and children produces secondary benefits such as more efficient courts, a stronger economy as well as

well as children more ready to learn. Third, quality early childhood programs can be the key forums for implementing the findings of the White House Brain Conference. In addition to tailoring educational programs, they can serve as unparalleled sites to screen and link children to the immunizations, basic health care, developmental assessments, early intervention services, and healthy nutrition that are vital for healthy development.

I am hopeful that these themes will be highlighted at the upcoming White House Conference on Child Care. I look forward to discussing the conference, developments on Adoption 2002 and other matters with you in the near future.

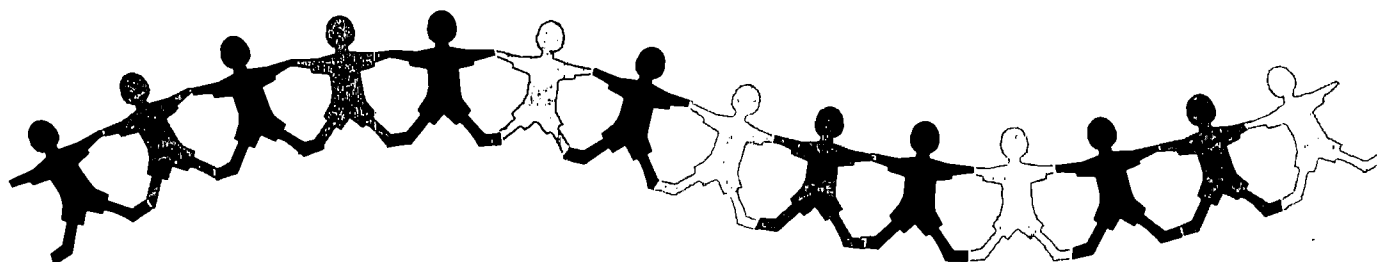
I hope that you and your baby are doing well.

Warm regards,


Sheryl Dicker

**A Guide to Starting,
Building and Operating
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New York's Courts**

A Good Place For Children



**New York State Permanent
Judicial Commission on Justice
for Children**

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Acknowledgements

"A Good Place for Children" would not have been possible without the contributions of so many people who have worked with us to build a statewide network of Children Centers in New York.

In particular, we would like to thank...

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The W.T. Grant Foundation for its generous support of our initial survey of children and families in New York's courts;

The Children's Center providers and their staff, who are responsible for our programs' continuing excellence;

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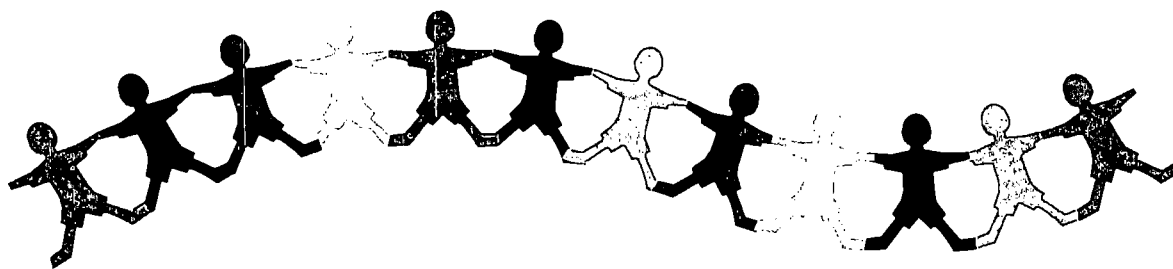
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An Invitation to Innovation

Like so many innovations, the idea for Children's Centers in New York Courts developed from a series of simple observations. When we walked through the hallways, waiting rooms and even into the Family, Criminal and Civil courtrooms in our State, we saw a significant number of adults, mostly women, trying to watch over their children. The noise and commotion caused by these understandably restless and bored children often distracted judges and court personnel as they proceeded through the calendar of cases. Similarly, parents were distracted from their important business with the court. Sometimes children were exposed to testimony or behavior that was frightening or at least inappropriate. Courtrooms and waiting rooms were clearly no place for children.

We suspected that the children and families we saw in court were in need of a whole range of services they were not getting, and after some preliminary investigation our hunch was confirmed.

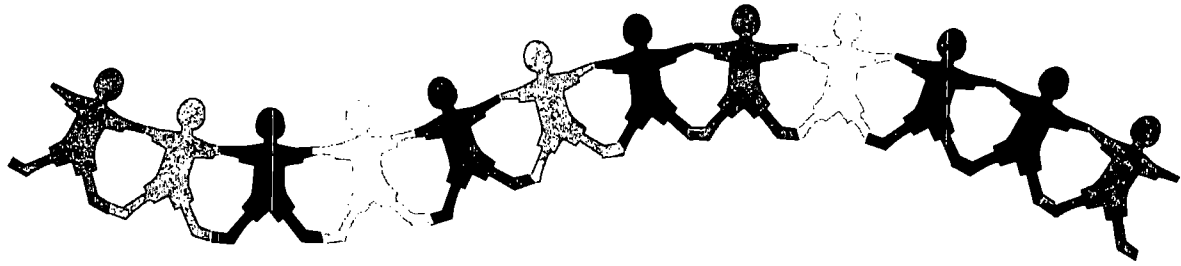
A light went on in our collective heads. We saw the problem of noisy and disruptive children in courtrooms as an opportunity to link an at-risk population to needed services. Our idea was to create Children's Centers – safe, separate and supervised child care areas in our courts. With children well cared for and out of the oftentimes chaotic environment in and around the court, judges would have quieter, more orderly courtrooms; caregivers would concentrate on the proceedings at hand; and children would enjoy a constructive and enriching child care setting. Finally, the Centers would connect children and families with services they needed. It was a win-win situation.

When we took our observations and the Children's Center idea to others, we were heartened by their positive and productive response. Judges lent their support by approving and creating space for the Centers.

Lawyers offered their advocacy services and raised money. Child care providers demonstrated interest in staffing the programs. Perhaps most importantly, in 1993 the New York State Legislature appropriated \$300,000 to the State's Department of Social Services to work with the Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children (Judicial Commission) to set up a statewide system of high quality Children's Centers. Encouraged by the work of the Judicial Commission, funding was extended for an additional \$300,000 in each of the following two years. We were on our way.

This manual represents the learning derived from our first three years of starting and operating this statewide system of Children's Centers. We have worked hard to ensure that these Centers are stimulating, physically and emotionally safe, age-appropriate and that they are indeed good places for children. We have striven to create a drop-in child care model that is relatively low-cost. We have tried to encourage a collaborative approach to starting these Centers that enables judges, lawyers, child care providers and service providers to work together to make this important reform in their own jurisdictions.

Many people have joined in the effort to establish our system of Children's Centers. In each jurisdiction, a diverse and conscientious coalition identified resources in its own community and designed, within the requirements set out by the Judicial Commission, a Children's Center program that makes sense for its courts. All of us are justifiably proud that these groups of committed people with a relatively modest investment of time and money have ended up with a return that not only makes sense for their courts and for society, but also produces smiles on the faces of so many children and their families.



Since 1991, the Judicial Commission, which has directed this work statewide, has focused its attention on poor young children aged 0-5 in and around the court system. Our central areas of reform have been:

1. Improving access to early intervention services for children with developmental delays;
2. Providing services to children spending their time waiting in New York State's courts; and
3. Assessing and improving State court proceedings relating to foster care, termination of parental rights and adoption.

The work of promoting and supporting the Children's Center system, therefore, has been and continues to be central to our mission and focus. We hope you will join with us as we continue to work to make our courts more efficient and more responsive to the needs of the children and families that come into court. We hope you will work with us as we attempt to ensure that every court in this country that needs it has a "good place for children" to stay while their parents have their day in court.

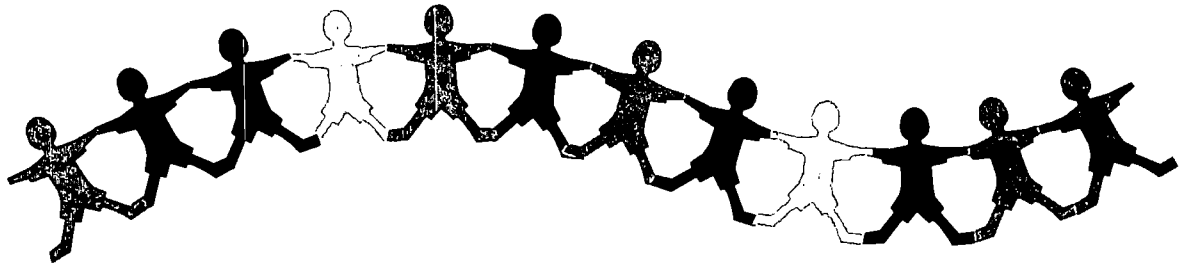
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How to Use This Manual

“A Good Place for Children” is meant to be a comprehensive guide to starting, building and operating a Children’s Center. However, you might not need all the information included here, so we have designed it in such a way that you can get to what is pertinent quickly and easily. Each section can be easily removed from this binder, conveniently photocopied and made available to others. Of course, we encourage you to read the whole manual, but if you are looking for specific information, here’s how to find it:

Chapter One, “A Good Place for Children: Starting, Building and Operating a Children’s Center,” provides an overview of the Children’s Centers and their development. This chapter is also helpful for those looking to build an argument for a Children’s Center in their jurisdiction or for anyone who is hoping to communicate the idea to broader audiences. These arguments and descriptions have been effective for others and may be adapted to your own situation.

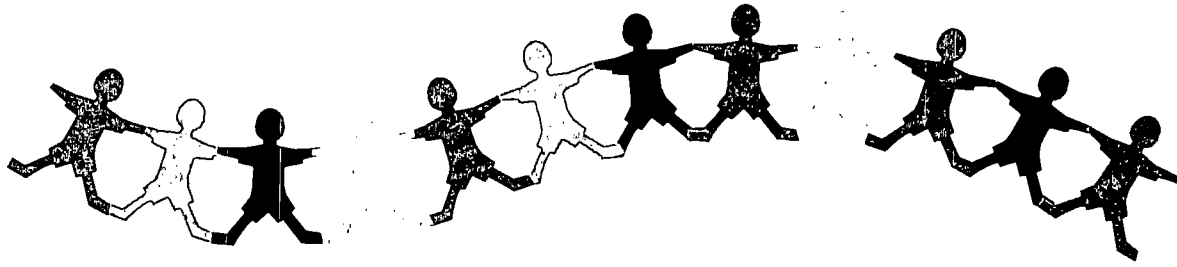
If you are interested in demographic information about the children who come to Family Court in New York State or you want to create your own demographic profile of children in your state, consult Chapter Two, “Our Children, Our Families, Our Courts: A Profile of the New York State Court System.” This chapter briefly describes the New York State Family Court system. It also summarizes a 1993 survey of the children and families who come to court, conducted by the Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children (Judicial Commission). In New York, the data from this survey have guided our Centers’ program development and helped Centers identify the service providers that best match the needs of the children and families served.

Chapter Three, “Getting Started: Adapting the Children’s Center Model to Your Court System,” provides a nuts-and-bolts collaborative approach to beginning the process of actually establishing a Children’s Center. Outlining a step-by-step approach, from “Establishing an Advisory Committee” to “Developing A Children’s Center Program,” this section also includes two “Getting Started” case studies that describe this process in action.

If you are trying to find and adapt the right space for a Children’s Center in your jurisdiction, look to Chapter Four, “A Safe, Supportive Place: Identifying and Designing Space for a Children’s Center.” This chapter sets out minimum facility requirements used in developing sites in New York State. It also includes principles for a well-designed Center and a basic architectural program that will enable you to create a space that is enriching, safe and conducive to constructive child care.

Chapter Five, “Designing a Children’s Center Program for Your Court System,” outlines a set of program standards, including staffing, which the Judicial Commission has developed for Children’s Center programs. It also includes important sections on enriching the quality of care in a drop-in setting and connecting children to services. A day in the life of one of these programs from a staff member’s perspective and a glimpse of a Center focusing on the children round out this section.

Chapter Six, “Fundraising,” is a no-nonsense guide to raising monies to support a Children’s Center. It relies on a few well-known, but usually ignored, principles of fundraising as well as a fundraising case study from



one of our Centers. Again, we present what has worked for us in the past in the hope that you will adapt the information to your needs and make it work for you.

Various appendices are cross-referenced throughout the book, but also may be of use separately.

In sum, we hope “A Good Place for Children” is useful and user-friendly. We look forward to hearing how you used this manual to help develop and operate a Children’s Center in your area.

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Chapter



A Good Place for Children: Children's Centers in New York State's Courts

Serving Children in Court: The Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children

In 1988, New York State established the Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children (Judicial Commission) to address the problems of children whose lives and life chances are shaped by the New York State court system. In 1991, Judge Judith Kaye and Ellen Schall were appointed co-chairs, and the Judicial Commission turned its attention to poor children, ages 0-5.

The Judicial Commission first did a series of informational interviews with key stakeholders in the court system – judges, lawyers, child advocates, policy experts and, of course, parents and children coming into court. We found that young children brought to court – sometimes as victims or witnesses, but generally because their caregivers lacked reliable child care – placed an enormous strain on the operation of our courts. Their very presence not only disrupted court proceedings, but made it difficult for their caregivers to concentrate on court business. Additionally, these children sometimes witnessed inappropriate and frightening testimony and behavior. To address this need, the Judicial Commission formed a Services in the Court Working Group and began to look for ways to serve young children and their families while they waited in court.

Children's Centers: Good for Courts, Good for Children

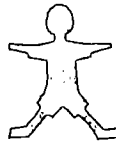
Derived from the Judicial Commission's focus and these findings, the idea for a statewide system of Children's Centers – separate, safe, supervised and supportive environments for children coming to court – was born. We wanted to provide quality, reliable

child care that would quickly earn the trust of parents and children alike and ease the sometimes chaotic environment of some of our busiest courts.

In addition, we had the notion that the Children's Centers could do more than provide child care. We suspected that the children brought to court were among the most vulnerable in the State and saw the Children's Centers as providing a unique opportunity to link these poor young children and their families to needed services. Supported by a \$10,000 grant from the W.T. Grant Foundation and conducted by the Judicial Commission, a 1992-93 survey of the children and families coming to Family Court verified what we suspected:

- A majority of the children's families received Aid for Dependent Children and/or Medicaid.
- Many children covered by Medicaid were not receiving WIC benefits (Women, Infants and Children – a nutritional counseling and food supplement program), although they were categorically eligible for it.
- An alarming number of the children had chronic health problems or other disabling conditions.
- Fewer than half of the children were enrolled in any pre-school programs.

Children's Centers, thus, could do two important things. First, they could provide child care services to children while their families were in court. And second, Children Centers could create an information-rich setting, possibly the only place until a child entered school, where these families could learn about, be linked with and gain access to needed and available services.



Making Children's Centers a Reality

During 1992, the Judicial Commission investigated the few pre-existing drop-in child care services that were available in New York State courts. These were located in New York City and in Ulster and Monroe Counties. The Judicial Commission first looked to the oldest and most established of these centers – those operated by Victim Services in New York City. In 1976, Victim Services had first initiated and implemented the idea for a drop-in child care center in Kings County Criminal Court. They subsequently established programs in Bronx County and New York County Family Courts as well. These centers were run by licensed teachers and incorporated important concepts of early childhood programming into their design. The Judicial Commission also traveled to Ulster County where a nursery was operating, staffed exclusively by volunteer Foster Grandparents. Finally, the Judicial Commission visited the children's waiting area in Monroe County, operated by Catholic Family Center.

In addition, the Judicial Commission found that several efforts to start Children's Centers were underway elsewhere in the State, but that these efforts were stymied due to a lack of space and funding. In March of 1993, the Judicial Commission realized that an entity within the court system was necessary to establish a statewide system with consistent standards, funding and supervision.

Following a fatal shooting in the waiting area of one of the State's Family Courts, the Judicial Commission decided to act quickly. The Judicial Commission approached the New York State Legislature and asked that funds be appropriated as a line item in the State's Department of Social Services' (DSS) child care budget. Later that Spring, the Legislature appropriated \$300,000 for the start-up of Children's Centers.

Since the Centers were to be drop-in child care facilities where generally children would spend fewer than three hours a day, DSS determined that the Centers were not subject to their licensing requirements. However, to ensure that high quality staffing, facility and program standards were maintained in the Children's Centers, the

Judicial Commission, working with DSS, developed a set of minimum requirements tailored to a court-based, drop-in child care program (see Appendix A). Based on these minimum requirements, the Judicial Commission issued a Request for Proposals in August 1993 and received 17 proposals from 15 counties, totalling \$1.2 million in requests. Six non-profit providers were chosen to serve the following courts:

- Albany County Family Court
- Erie County Family and County Courts
- Monroe County Family Court
- New York County Civil, Criminal and Housing Courts
- Richmond County Family Court
- Westchester County at Yonkers Family Court

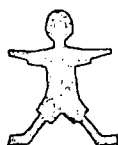
Implementing Centers:

Statewide Requirements, Local Realities

While the Judicial Commission defined the parameters of the program, each jurisdiction had considerable latitude in creating its own Children's Center so that it met local needs. This resulted in considerable differences in space configurations and staffing models in the Centers that were started.

For example, the Judicial Commission mandated a minimum of 35 square feet per child and a minimum total square footage of 150 square feet for each Center. Today, Children's Centers range widely in size from 216 to 944 square feet. Similarly, the Judicial Commission required a separate space for infants and toddlers, and one locality has created a glassed-in space, while another smaller facility has used furniture and toys to create these separate areas¹.

1. Efforts to find and develop space in the State's courthouses were often challenging. The Judicial Commission, therefore, worked with Chief Judge Kaye to establish a new Guideline for Court Facilities under the Rules of the Chief Judge that required all new construction or major renovation in the State's court facilities set aside space for a Children's Center (See Appendix B).



And while each Center provides quality child care with at least one full-time staff person trained in early childhood development, there are considerable differences in staffing models. Westchester Children's Association in Yonkers, for example, uses one paid staff with volunteers. Victim Services in New York County and the Erie County YWCA operate Centers with greater volume and rely on two staff members each as well as volunteers. Volunteers have been recruited from a variety of places such as the Foster Grandparents Program, the Retired Senior Volunteer Program and local colleges.

All these Centers have set about their common work in safe, supportive environments but all have done so in ways that made sense to the unique requirements of their court and county. Flexibility – within the guidelines – has made replicability easier and led to helpful innovations.

Year Two: Additional Support from New York State

Based on the success of our first year's start-up and our interest in developing models to connect families and children with needed services at the Children's Centers, the Judicial Commission requested additional funding from DSS. In 1994 and then in 1995, \$300,000 was appropriated to support the start-up and enhancement of Children's Centers, each time as part of the federal Child Care Development Block Grant. (See Appendix C for a list of current Children's Center providers.)

Since 1995, the Judicial Commission has been testing three models to improve the link between Children's Centers and social service providers: outstationing staff from an external agency such as Head Start in the Children's Center; deputizing Children's Center staff; and stationing a generic worker hired by the provider agency in the Children's Center.

In the Spring of 1995, Head Start Family Workers were outstationed in the Children's Centers in Richmond

County and Albany County. The workers, whose case-loads are derived solely from the Children's Centers, connect families with Head Start as well as other essential services. Once children are enrolled in Head Start, they receive a comprehensive health exam and are fully immunized. Children's Center staff also are being deputized to complete all or part of the enrollment process for services such as WIC and the NYNEX Lifeline telephone service.

In addition to the pilot programs in Richmond and Albany Counties, this year a New York City Children's Center and the Erie County and Monroe County Centers are testing a generic worker model. The workers' primary focus is connecting children to essential early childhood services and comprehensive health services including WIC.

Staff at other Children's Centers have also begun to develop their own connections to service providers in their respective jurisdictions. For example, Bethanne

Denker, the head teacher at the Richmond County Children's Center, has developed excellent working relationships with several offices in the local Department of Health. In fact, when Denker alerts them, WIC staff members now come to the Richmond County Center and sign up WIC-eligible families. In Yonkers, Center Director Jaqueline Pezzula helps eligible parents fill out the necessary forms for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). This past winter, the former Erie County Director, Romanita Pinto, helped numerous families secure emergency food, clothing and shelter. Throughout the year, Erie County's Center directs families to local early childhood education programs.

Spreading the Word About Children's Centers

The work of establishing a statewide system of Children's Centers in New York is a work in progress, and we continue to refine and strengthen our model. We believe our experience can provide an important

**New York State's
Children's Centers can be
an important prototype
for similar child care
environments in courts
throughout the nation.**



body of knowledge for the growing number of corporate drop-in child care settings as well as in social service settings for homeless children and the children of persons with AIDS.

Most particularly, we believe that New York State's Children's Centers can be an important prototype for similar child care environments in courts throughout the nation. While we offer this book to help New Yorkers place a Children's Center in each county that needs it, we also hope that our colleagues across the country can take this idea, adapt it to their own particular needs and resources and build – where necessary – Children's Centers in courts from Maine to California. We are committed, and indeed look forward to working with you in transforming the problem of children in our courts into an opportunity to link these children to needed services, to creating a safe, supportive and separate space – that is, a good place – for children in every court.

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Chapter



Our Children, Our Families, Our Courts: A Profile of the New York State Court System

This chapter is meant to provide you with some background about New York State's court system, as well as the results of a 1992-93 Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children (Judicial Commission) survey of the families and children in six New York State Family Courts. These data should provide a context in which to understand how and why Children's Centers operate in New York.

The Family Court in New York State: A Short Overview

While each state court system is different, we would like to describe the New York State court system to give you an idea of the kinds of cases in which our families are involved. Although one of New York County's Children's Centers is located in the Housing, Criminal and Civil Court and one Kings County Children's Center is located in the Criminal Court, the remaining Centers serve Family Courts.

Established in 1962, the New York State Family Court handles most cases involving youth between the ages of 7 and 16 charged with an offense that would be a crime if committed by an adult. Most of the families who use the Children's Centers, however, are in court for cases involving family disputes, including domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, support payments, child custody, adoption and paternity proceedings. The only family problem that the court does not deal with is divorce.

In New York State, Family Court judges serve 10-year terms. Outside New York City they are elected. Within the five boroughs, Family Court judges are appointed by the Mayor. In smaller counties, a single judge may be responsible not only for the Family Court but also for Surrogate's Court (for probate, wills, adoption and estate settlement) and County Court (for civil matters with money claims not exceeding \$25,000).

Getting to Know the Children in Family Court

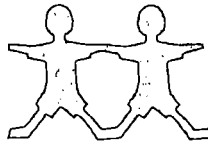
During 1992 and 1993, the Judicial Commission conducted a survey of the children and families who came to Family Court in six New York State counties – two in New York City and four upstate. The survey provided powerful evidence of the need for Children's Centers in New York's courts. It also confirmed what we had suspected, that the Children's Centers could be used as an opportunity to connect children and families to essential services and programs.

The survey discovered that the families and children in court were overwhelmingly poor and in many cases unconnected to services they needed and to which they were entitled. It also found that families and caregivers of children generally brought children to court because they did not have sufficient or reliable child care. A majority of respondents reported that they would welcome and use Children's Centers – if they were available.

What We Found:

A Profile of Families that Bring Young Children to Court

The survey of parents and other caregivers bringing children to court reported here was designed to inform the Judicial Commission about the activities and facilities families wanted court-based Children's Centers to provide. It placed particular emphasis on these families' need for and interest in information and referral to other social services. Conducted by the Fund for Modern Courts' volunteers, Judicial Commission consultants and staff in the Family Courts in two New York City counties – New York and Queens – and four counties upstate – Albany, Monroe, Westchester and Ulster – this survey and its results provided strong support for Children's Centers. Major findings included:



- Most young children brought to court are poor and fall within the Judicial Commission's target population, as the majority of families receive AFDC and/or Medicaid. There was also a large number of near-poor or working poor families. Helping families gain access to WIC (Women, Infants and Children – a nutritional counseling and food supplement program) emerged as a significant service need that current and proposed Children's Centers might address; many children covered by Medicaid are not receiving WIC although they are categorically eligible for it.
- Within the 0-5 age group, most children brought to court were two years old or younger, and children 0-1 were the largest age cohort. Children's Centers must, therefore, be able to care for infants if they are to meet the need for court-based child care.
- The overwhelming majority of children surveyed received timely health services, although those few with no or delayed immunizations are worrisome and merit attention. A significant number of families, however, had access only to hospital outpatient clinics, a source of health care that often does not provide continuous or preventive pediatric services.
- Continuity of care and preventive services are particularly important for the significant minority of children with chronic health problems, linking these children with more effective health care could be a useful role for the Children's Centers. Center staff could also help these families arrange for early intervention and the other special services and entitlements many of these children require.
- Nearly half of the respondents said that they had no regular child care, and most brought their children to court because there was no one to care for them at home. A child care referral service would be a welcome component of court-based Children's Centers.

**Most [parents]
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- The majority of families did or would use court-based child care, and many families supported a comprehensive range of facilities and activities for children waiting in court including meals, clothing and a pre-school teacher. Some families, however, were reluctant to use Children's Centers or did not know they were available. If the Centers are to serve these families, Center staff must publicize their services and provide daily outreach in the court waiting areas.
- Many respondents expressed interest in information about health, child care, housing and nutrition services, a finding that provides support for expanding the information and referral role of Children's Centers.

The Survey's Purposes and Design

The survey described here was conducted to inform the Judicial Commission's work on court-based services: the need for child care and related activities and the feasibility and desirability of using the Children's Centers as an opportunity to provide or link families with other needed services. The survey was designed to address the following questions:

1. Why do families bring young children to court?
2. What are the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of these families? What are the service needs these characteristics suggest?
3. To what extent do the families themselves identify court-based child care as a desirable service? What activities and facilities would parents like child care centers in the courts to provide?
4. What additional services would they like information about?

A brief questionnaire was developed to answer these questions. After review by the Judicial Commission and subsequent revision, volunteers from the Fund for Modern Courts and staff and consultants from the



Judicial Commission administered the questionnaire to people waiting in the Family Courts in Albany, Monroe, Westchester, Ulster, Queens and New York Counties. While some Judicial Commission members were concerned that respondents might not want to answer personal questions during a stressful court appearance, this problem did not arise. Each interview took only a few minutes and was confidential, and almost everyone who was approached was willing to participate. An additional 57 interviews were conducted in August and September in the Family Courts in New York and Queens Counties.

This section describes the findings from an analysis of 194 interviews distributed as shown in Table 1.

As will be described below, families bringing young children to the Family Courts in New York City differ significantly from those bringing children to court in the upstate counties surveyed. The analysis that follows compares New York City (New York and Queens counties; 73 cases) with the four upstate counties (Albany, Monroe, Westchester and Ulster; 121 cases).

Why do families bring children to court?

The overwhelming majority of respondents were mothers of the children brought to court (56 or 76.7 percent of New York City respondents and 98 or 81 percent of their upstate counterparts). Children in upstate courts were somewhat more likely to be brought to court by their fathers (14 or 11.6 percent compared to 6 or 8.2 percent in New York City), while New York City children were more likely to be brought to court by their grandmothers (9 or 12.3 percent compared to 6 or 5 percent upstate). Most respondents brought only one child, although upstate families were much more likely to bring only one child (97 or 85.3 percent compared to 48 or 65.3 percent in New York City). The young children taken to court were predominantly infants or toddlers, with 23.4 percent of New York City children and 27.7 percent of upstate children younger than one year of age, and fewer than one quarter as old as four or five statewide¹. Thus, Children's Centers must have facilities for infants if they are to meet these families' court-based child care needs.

County	Number	Percent
Albany	45	23.2%
Monroe	47	24.2%
New York	48	24.7%
Queens	25	12.9%
Westchester	11	5.7%
Ulster	18	9.3%
Total	194	

Table 1:
Interviews by County

1. Some respondents also brought children older than five, but these children are not within the Judicial Commission's target population and were not tracked.

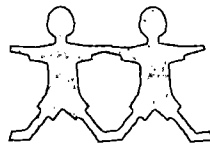


Table 2 summarizes the reasons respondents gave for bringing young children to court.

Reason Children Were in Court	New York City	Upstate
Required for the case	15 (21.1%)	15 (12.7%)
No one with whom to leave child	39 (54.9%)	75 (62.7%)
Wanted to bring child	17 (23.9%)	29 (24.6%)
Total	71 ²	119

*Table 2:
Why Children Were
Brought to Court*

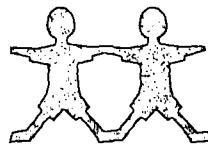
Lack of child care was the major reason for bringing children to court upstate, although a significant minority said that they brought their children because they “wanted to.” It is interesting that a higher percentage of New York City respondents said they were required by the court to bring their children even though the distribution of case types was generally similar, as shown in Table 3.

Case Type	New York City	Upstate
Custody	18 (30.5%)	32 (34%)
Support	27 (45.8%)	32 (34%)
Paternity	5 (8.5%)	9 (9.6%)
Other	11 (15.2%)	21 (22.4%)
Total	61 ³	94

*Table 3:
Type of Case*

2. In this table and those that follow, missing values (non-responses) are excluded from the counts and percentages.

3. This question yielded the largest number of non-responses, 14 in New York City and 27 upstate. Whether it was perceived as too sensitive or respondents were unsure of their case type is unknown.



What are the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of families bringing young children to court, and what do these characteristics suggest about service needs?

The New York City and upstate families interviewed for the survey were quite similar in size; as shown in Table 4, most have only one or two children. This supports the findings of a preliminary analysis of data from Children's Centers operated by Victim Services in Kings County, Bronx County and New York County Family Courts, conducted in April 1993.

New York City families were much more likely to be Latino than upstate families of whom nearly half were white. The findings for New York City differ from those of the preliminary study of Bronx County, Kings County and New York County Children's Centers, which found equal percentages of Latino and African-American families; this difference is a reflection of differences in the boroughs from which data were gathered for the two studies.

Number of Children	New York City	Upstate
1	24 (32.9%)	45 (37.2%)
2	20 (39.7%)	37 (30.6%)
3 or more	27 (23.3%)	39 (32.2%)
Total	71	121

*Table 4:
Number of Children
in the Family*

Upstate families are more likely to have three or more children even though, as described above, they are more likely than their New York City counterparts to bring only one child to court.

Table 5 presents the ethnic background of the respondents.

Ethnicity⁴	New York City	Upstate
African American	41 (57.7%)	59 (49.6%)
Latino	26 (36.6%)	3 (2.5%)
Non-Latino White	4 (5.6%)	56 (47.1%)
Total	71	118

*Table 5:
Ethnic Distribution*

4. These data are based on interviewer judgments rather than responses to a specific question on ethnicity.



Table 6 shows the employment and public assistance status of families interviewed.

Employment / Public Assistance	New York City	Upstate
AFDC	46 (63%)	51 (47.7%)
Medicaid	58 (80.6%)	86 (74.1%)
WIC	35 (47.9%)	62 (56.9%)
Employed	15 (20.8%)	40 (34.8%)

*Table 6:
Employment and Public
Assistance Status.*

The public assistance status of these families is a major determinant of their eligibility for services and a significant factor shaping their service needs. Approximately two-thirds of New York City families and nearly half of upstate families interviewed were receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)⁵, and even more were receiving Medicaid, placing their children within the Judicial Commission's target population of poor young children. We also found a significant number of near-poor or working poor families: nearly 18 percent of families in New York City and 26 percent of those upstate received Medicaid but not AFDC. While all young children receiving AFDC or Medicaid were categorically eligible for WIC, the fact that many were not

receiving it probably reflects both inadequate outreach and the shortage of WIC slots, particularly in New York City. Court-based Children's Centers might provide an opportunity to help some of these families obtain WIC for their children.

Only 5 New York City families (6.8%) and 6 upstate families (5.2%) reported that they had no health insurance, reflecting New York State's better-than-average health insurance rate.

Table 7 presents data on the health care of children in the sample received.

Health Services	New York City	Upstate
Received health care in the last 3 months	59 (80.8%)	87 (71.9%)
Immunizations reported as up-to-date	69 (94.5%)	108 (89.3%)

*Table 7:
Level of Health Services*

5. The preliminary New York City study found that nearly 88% of the families were on public assistance, a difference that most likely reflects the different boroughs included in the two studies.



Source of Care	New York City	Upstate
Community Health Center	112 (17.1%)	32 (28.1%)
HMO	9 (12.9%)	17 (14.9%)
Department of Health Child Health Station	6 (8.6%)	0
Private Practitioner	14 (20%)	29 (25.4%)
Hospital Outpatient Clinic	23 (32.9%)	25 (21.9%)
Hospital Emergency Room	1 (1.4%)	0
Other Source ⁶	5 (7.1%)	11 (9.6%)
Total	70	114

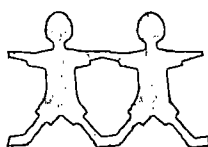
Table 8:
Sources of Health Care

Although these data are self-reported and probably overestimate the level of health services provided, when coupled with the small number of families without health insurance, they suggest that the overwhelming majority of young children brought to court received considerable health care. In addition, these indicators are closely related: children who received health care in the last three months were significantly more likely to have up-to-date immunizations than those who did not receive health care in this period. Even though few in number, (four in New York City and 13 in the upstate counties) children with no or delayed immunizations are worrisome. The survey finding that they can be identified when they are in court provides an opportunity to redress this problem.

Table 8 shows these families' regular sources of health care.

While a high percentage of this population received health services, some of their regular sources of care were less than optimal. These children's limited access to private practitioners is clearly a problem statewide. The small percentage of New York City families using Child Health Stations operated by the City's Department of Health probably reflects these facilities' curtailed schedules and restrictive age criteria. Especially in New York City but also upstate, hospital outpatient clinics fill the gap. These clinics, which are typically staffed by rotating physicians-in-training or part-time, per session physicians, often provide no continuity of care. There is some good news,

6. These include specialized programs for handicapped children, union-sponsored health centers and programs for children in foster care.



County	Most Frequent Source of Care	Least Frequent Source of Care
Albany	Community Health Center: 17 (38.6%)	HMO: 1 (6.02%)
Monroe	HMO: 13 (30.2%)	Private Practitioner: 7 (16.3%)
New York	Hospital Outpatient Clinic: 19 (41.3%)	Department of Health Child Health Station: 3 (6.5%)
Queens	HMO: 6 (25%)	Department of Health Child Health Station: 2 (8.3%)
Westchester	Community Health Center: 5 (45.5%)	Hospital Outpatient Clinic: 0
Ulster	Private Practitioner: 11 (68.8%)	Hospital Outpatient Clinic: 0

Table 9:
Most and Least Frequently
Used Type of Care by County

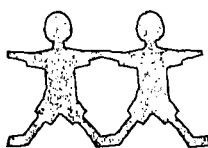
however: only one family identified an emergency room as its regular source of care, reflecting hospitals' recent efforts to divert patients with routine problems from ER's to walk-in clinics. Community health centers seem to be more available upstate than in New York City.

The sources of health care that were identified reflected county-specific patterns in health care delivery as shown in Table 9.

If the Judicial Commission decides to use court-based child care as an opportunity to address the problem of children who are medically underserved or who have access only to fragmented, non-continuous health care, it must develop a county-by-county strategy that fits each county's particular mix of health services. We found that health care is a critical service for this population as

shown by the high percentage of children with chronic health problems: 20 (30.6 percent) in New York City and 23 (20.5 percent) upstate. As is the case nationally, the most commonly identified problem was asthma, with 13 New York City children (18.1 percent) and 14 upstate children (12.5 percent) having this problem. Preventive and continuous care is particularly important in the management of asthma and can prevent costly and distressing emergency room visits and hospitalizations. However, a significant minority of families with asthmatic children, 10 or 38.4 percent, relied on hospital outpatient clinics, the source of care least likely to be preventive or continuous.

Other health problems included a wide range of chronic illnesses such as congenital heart disease, Downs Syndrome, cerebral palsy, sickle cell disease and HIV-



AIDS. Many of these conditions require early intervention and special education as well as evaluation of eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and court-based Children's Centers offer the opportunity to provide information on and make needed referrals to these services. Respondents were also asked if they had specific worries about the health, growth or development of their young children. A significant minority acknowledged such worries: 21 (28.8 percent) in New York City and 22 (19.1 percent) upstate. As would be expected, respondents whose children had health problems were much more likely to worry than those whose children did not have health problems. Other worries were behavioral or developmental and included hyperactivity, delayed speech and persistent crying, many of which also suggest the need to evaluate these children for special services. Most respondents said they had someone on whom they could rely for help with and advice about their children: 58 (80.6 percent) in New York City and 103 (85.1 percent) upstate. In most cases, this person was a relative, typically the children's grandmother.

Finally, respondents were asked if they had access to child care; 37 New York City respondents (50.7 percent) said they did have child care compared to 70 (60.9 percent) upstate respondents. Not surprisingly, working parents were much more likely to have child care than those who were at home. Of those with child care, New York City respondents were significantly more likely to have institutional child care – a day care center or Head Start – than their upstate counterparts: 16 (45.7 percent) New York City respondents who had child care had institutional child care compared to 16 (22.9 percent) upstate. In both New York City and upstate, however, most child care was provided by relatives or private babysitters, reflecting a statewide shortage of day care and Head Start slots. As was also shown by the preliminary analysis of Victim Services data, linking families with appropriate child care is a major service need for the Judicial Commission to address.

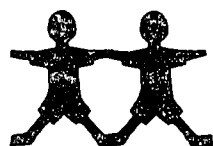
What did the respondents think about court-based child care? What activities and facilities would they like child care centers to provide?

Most respondents said they did or would use a court-based child care center. Interviewers commented, however, that many respondents kept their children with them in court waiting rooms rather than bringing them to the Children's Centers in courts that had Children's Centers.

Indeed, nearly half of the respondents from New York City (35 or 47.2 percent) and nearly one-quarter of those from upstate counties (29 or 24 percent) said they did not or would not use a court-based child care center. This varied significantly by county from a high of 80 percent (36) of Albany respondents who said they would use a child care center in court if one were available to a low of 48 percent (12) in Queens.

Not surprisingly, respondents who brought their children to court because they wanted them to be there were less likely to think they would use court-based child care than those whose children were required to be in court or for whom no child care was available at home. Other respondents said that their children would cry if they were left. Interestingly, Latino parents were less likely to say they did or would use court-based child care than African-American or white parents.

Observation of the Children's Centers in Kings County, Bronx County and New York County Family Courts, carried out for the preliminary study mentioned above, found the Centers to be cheerful and well-equipped with caring and capable staff, and while some children fussed for a few minutes when their parents left, most did not. Almost everyone seemed to enjoy the toys and the other children, and many were reluctant to leave when their parents returned. As part of the development of new Children's Centers, the Judicial Commission understood it needed to consider an effort to publicize the Centers and educate parents about them. Center staff in Bronx and New York Counties find it effective



to walk through the court waiting areas periodically to identify young children and speak with their parents about bringing them to the Children's Center.

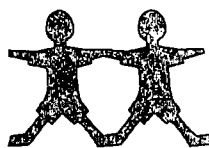
In addition to child care, respondents were asked whether they would like the courts to provide other activities and facilities as follows:

Activities / Facilities	New York City	Upstate
Better bathrooms	41 (56.2%)	14 (11.6%)
Changing areas	34 (46.6%)	52 (43%)
Diapers / Changes of clothing	22 (30.1%)	20 (16.5%)
Food	40 (54.8%)	25 (20.7%)
Pre-school teacher	47 (64.4%)	35 (28.9%)
Toys	47 (64.4%)	64 (52.9%)
Television	43 (58.9%)	26 (21.5%)

Table 10:
Interest in Other Court-Based Child-Focused Activities and Facilities.

In general, New York City respondents were more interested in additional activities and facilities than their upstate counterparts. This is an interesting finding given the previous finding that a higher percentage of upstate respondents did or would use a court-based child care center. One explanation is the difference in waiting time; on average, New York City respondents who had a previous court appearance said that they had to wait at least two hours, while most upstate respondents said their wait was less than one hour.

There was a significant correlation among the responses to these questions: parents who wanted any of these services were likely to want most or all of them. This finding suggests two distinct subgroups: those who are



interested in services and those who are not. The Judicial Commission needs to decide how much outreach is feasible to engage the latter group⁷.

Respondents were also asked whether they were interested in information about an additional set of services as follows:

Service Area	New York City	Upstate
Child care	35 (47.9%)	31 (25.6%)
Health care	20 (27.4%)	16 (13.2%)
Housing	35 (47.9%)	27 (22.3%)
Nutrition	40 (54.8%)	25 (20.7%)

*Table 11:
Interest in Service
Information*

A significant minority of families was interested in information about these services. As with court-based activities and facilities, New York City families were much more likely to express interest. Similarly, there is a high correlation among these questions; respondents who were interested in information about any particular service were much more likely to be interested in information about all services. In addition, there is a high correlation between the two types of services in question; respondents who wanted additional court-based activities and facilities were much more likely to be interested in information about the set of services listed above. Plans to include information and referral services as part of the activities of court-based Children's Centers must focus on outreach if all needy families are to be engaged.

7. The Judicial Commission introduced several models to implement the services connection during 1995.

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Getting Started: Adapting the Children's Center Model to Your Court System

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the nuts-and-bolts information needed to develop a Children's Center in your court system. During the last three years, we have gathered the experience of fourteen different jurisdictions in New York State as they have conceived, organized and implemented their programs. These fourteen sites serve the needs of their communities and employ a diverse range of service providers. Yet all sites accomplish the basic goal of providing safe, supportive and separate child care settings, proximate to the court. All of our Centers comply with the set of minimum facility, staffing and program requirements established by the Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children (Judicial Commission). Moreover, all share the Judicial Commission's commitment not only to provide high quality care for children while their families are in court, but also to use the Centers to help link families and children to needed services.

This chapter provides technical assistance to those in the process of developing a Children's Center program. It concludes with two case studies of Children's Center development to provide a richer understanding of the kind of innovation and resourcefulness this process requires. As such, this chapter is a road map, describing a generic main route to creating a Children's Center and also alluding to back roads some of the Centers have traveled when necessary. However you are able to start a Children's Center, we hope this information will at least get you on your way.

Is There a Problem? What Should We Be Doing? Defining Your Objectives

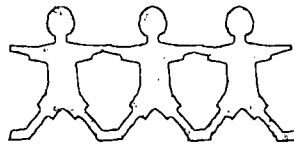
Before you begin the formal process of organizing a Children's Center, it is important to evaluate your court's needs and then sketch out the basic parameters of a Children's Center that will meet those needs.

First, does your court have children disrupting proceedings and distracting parents from the business that brought them there? Are these disruptions and distractions at a level that requires a child care facility?

If the answers to these questions are yes, you should begin an effort to organize a Children's Center that will provide, at a minimum, a separate, enclosed, supervised and supportive environment for children who are victims or witnesses or whose caregivers must attend to court business. The facility should be separate and enclosed because this is the only way you can have a constructive child care setting that enables parents to conduct their business with the court. An unenclosed corner of an existing waiting room set aside for children is not sufficient. Similarly, the facility should be supervised and supportive. A courthouse is often a stressful place for children. When parents leave their children in an unfamiliar child care setting, they must have confidence that their children will be well cared for. Therefore, an unsupervised room, which does not address the psychological needs of children and which creates a potential liability for the court, is not enough.

Second, in addition to these basics, the Children's Center effort must be committed to connecting children and families to child centered services. This ensures that the facility will not only provide high quality child care, but will also leverage the time and money spent on the Center as a means to link children and families to services they need.

A Children's Center should be a separate, enclosed, supervised, supportive environment committed to connecting families to services. This may be a bareboned description, but it will help you begin to communicate your idea for a Center to potential members of your Advisory Committee.



Coming Together:

Forming an Inclusive Advisory Committee

Developing a Children's Center requires the support of a variety of individuals in and around your court system and community. It also requires the expertise of a variety of disciplines. It is important, therefore, to set up an Advisory Committee for your Center comprised of individuals whose cooperation and approval will be required and/or who have specific expertise necessary to establish the Center. Some of the individuals you should consider for your Advisory Committee include¹:

The Supervising Judge or His/Her Designee and Other Interested Judges

The court's participation in the project is essential. The Administrative Judge and/or Supervising Judge will have to approve both the space and program design.

Furthermore, these judges can provide basic information on the day-to-day operation of the court. Brief them on the project early on and request their participation. Any concerns that they may have should be addressed and mutually acceptable solutions incorporated into the program design.

In fact, a number of common concerns have been raised by the courts in New York. You might anticipate that the Administrative Judge and Supervising Judge or other court personnel will have questions about the use of volunteers, food service, Center security and liability. These concerns have been successfully addressed in New York by using paid staff in addition to volunteers, by serving self-contained snacks rather than meals, by working closely with court personnel in charge of security to develop satisfactory security procedures and by requiring that service providers obtain comprehensive general liability insurance that names the court system as an additional insured.

The assistance of other judges and court personnel, many of whom you will find to be strong advocates of the project, will also be extremely helpful. Talk to judges you think will be supportive and try to enlist their participation. In several counties such as Erie and New York, for example, judges were instrumental to the project's early success.

Court Personnel in Charge of Security

Court personnel in charge of security will also provide security for the Center. It is, therefore, important to seek their input in identifying, renovating and designing the space. Furthermore, once the Center is established you will have to work with them to establish and implement security procedures that ensure safe and smooth operations.

The County Executive and County Officials Responsible for Court Operations and Social Services

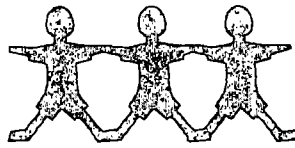
In New York State, the Unified Court System (UCS) is responsible for the functioning of the courthouse, but the locality is responsible for the facility itself. Therefore – in New York at least – it will be necessary to consult with county officials regarding the allocation of space for a Children's Center as well as the need for any required renovation. Since the locality either owns or leases the court facility, its officials must be consulted before any renovation work begins. Once permission for the Center is received, we have found that in general the county has been exceptionally cooperative. In Erie, Monroe and New York Counties, the local government has actually done the renovation or assumed its cost. The county may also be a source for Center volunteers through the JOBS or workfare programs. County government may also be a local source of operating funds for the Center.

Child Care Resources:

Your County Child Care Resource and Referral Agency (CCR & R)

In New York State, your local CCR & R serves as a community coordinating and planning agent for local day care services and offers a variety of support, including planning for day care programs according to the needs of the community, training child care staff and assisting in the development of new child care services. In Westchester County, the CCR & R has provided extensive train-

1. For those hoping to establish Children's Centers outside New York State, please use these suggestions to give you a sense of the categories of people you might recruit for an Advisory Committee, even if they have different titles with differently named agencies.



ing to the Children's Center staff, free of charge. In Albany County, the local CCR & R serves on the Advisory Committee and assisted in preparing the proposal and in program development.

If you are attempting to establish a Center outside New York State and do not know of a local or state agency analogous to a CCR & R, you can call the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (1-202-393-5501). They will direct you to a program in your area.

Child Care Providers

The participation of local child care providers in the project will be essential. Providers will assist in program and space design. One of them may actually run the program. Again, the CCR & R can facilitate this effort and will give you the names of local providers. Another good national resource for names of local child care providers is the National Association for the Education of Young Children (1-800-424-2460).

Child Advocacy Organizations

These organizations will be key advocates for the program. Furthermore, since many of these organizations are not-for-profit agencies, they will have fundraising experience and can be helpful in identifying and securing start-up and ongoing operating funds.

Other Organizations Associated with the Court

Organizations that have been helpful to existing Centers include the Court Appointed Special Advocates Program (CASA), the local Bar Associations and local Legal Services organizations. In Albany and Monroe Counties, the local Women's Bar Associations initiated their respective Children's Center projects and were instrumental in their success. In Onondaga County, the local Bar Association brought together the Advisory Committee and conducted the needs assessment.

Community Organizations

Local community organizations can provide support in establishing the program. They are also a wonderful source for volunteers and fundraising. In Richmond County, the Kiwanis Club worked for three years to establish a Children's Center in Family Court. Its fundraising efforts supported space renovations, and its generous donations put equipment and supplies in the Center. The Kiwanis Club continues to be involved in the Center through their participation on the Advisory Committee. Also, the Foster Grandparents Program and the Retired Senior Volunteers Program (RSVP) are located in every community and have provided reliable and compassionate volunteers. These volunteers are now being used in Richmond, New York and Erie Counties.

The participation of local child care providers in the project will be essential... One of them may actually run the program.

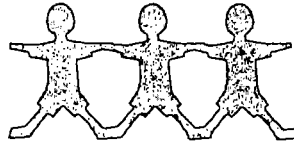
Making the Case: Some Talking Points

If possible, contact these individuals and organizations as early in your process as possible and brief them on the project. If you do not

know whom to talk to in a particular organization, ask to speak to the director. He or she may be interested in participating or may recommend a staff person. This work is worth the effort. It ensures that your process is inclusive and will help you secure resources from a broad range of sources in the future.

To help you in this work and to think specifically about these briefing calls, we have included a few talking points. These are meant simply as a guide to help you on your way, and you will no doubt modify them (or substitute your own script) as you continue taking the idea of a Children's Center to potential supporters. These talking points include:

1. You are calling regarding a project to establish a Children's Center in the (name of your court(s)).
2. The Center would provide a supervised, supportive and safe environment for children who might other-



wise disrupt court proceedings and be exposed to potentially traumatic and damaging courtroom testimony.

3. The Center would serve children who are victims or witnesses or whose caregiver must attend to court business and would connect children and families to services such as WIC, Head Start and child care.

4. The need for the Center was first raised in discussions with (or after a survey of the local court or however the need was first raised).

5. Such Centers have been successfully established in other parts of the State including New York, Richmond, Monroe, Erie, Westchester and Albany Counties (or in other parts of the country like California and Massachusetts).

6. We are seeking to build a coalition of interested individuals within the court and the community to pursue this important initiative and would appreciate your participation in the project.

Identifying Subcommittees

Early in the process your Advisory Committee should create subcommittees for each major task involved in starting a Children's Center. These tasks include conducting a needs assessment, securing the approval of the court and the county, identifying and securing space, designing the program, staffing the Center, developing a budget and fundraising. Make sure there are enough people on each subcommittee so that one person does not have to assume sole responsibility for any one task.

Assessing the Needs of Your Court System

To determine the specific needs of your court system, you and the members of your needs assessment subcommittee should conduct a survey of the children and families that come to your court. Ideally, this study should be conducted on five different days over a five week period to obtain an accurate profile (See Appendix D for a Sample Needs Assessment.).

The survey should elicit information regarding the number and ages of children in court on each day. If you do the assessment in the summer, you should ask whether the children's school or pre-school program would affect their need for Children's Center services during the school year. Other information that you will need includes the ages of the children who might potentially use the Center (less than 1, 1-2, 3-5 or over 6). You should also know the average number of children for each day of the week and the peak hours each day so that you can properly plan for space and staffing. These data will also help you build the case for your Center.

In analyzing your results, assume one-third of the caregivers bringing children with them to court may choose not to use the Center. Therefore, if there are on average 24 children in your court during a day, assume that you will have approximately 16 children in the Center each day (though probably not all at once). This will help you be more realistic in calculating the actual number of children who will use the Center on any given day and will be more helpful in the space and program design processes.

Getting to Yes:

Securing the Approval of the Court and the County

In securing approvals from the court and county, be prepared to address concerns regarding competing space priorities, funding, security and liability issues. Draw upon the successful experiences of other counties in providing a positive court experience for children and families and in increasing the efficient operation of the court. The Judicial Commission has supporting materials and positive media coverage on other Centers around New York State available for this purpose (See Appendix E.).

Space Issues

In specifically addressing issues concerning space, the old maxim, "if there's a will, there's a way," seems to hold true in every county that has worked to establish a Children's Center. Although finding space for Centers

To determine the specific needs of your court system, ...conduct a survey of the children and families that come to your court.



has been difficult at times, it has been accomplished without impinging upon essential court activities. One good example is the Monroe County Children's Center, which was carved out of an extremely large waiting room. Another is in Erie County, where the County Credit Union moved to another location to make room for a Children's Center.

Funding Issues

Another area of concern has been funding. Courts worry that funding for a Children's Center will be taken from their already strained budgets. Although funding for Children's Centers in New York State Courts has been earmarked in the State's Department of Social Services (DSS) budget for the start-up of Centers and in the UCS budget for ongoing operating costs of eleven Children's Centers (at least through 1996), providers are required to match these funds by 40% of their total program cost. Beyond 1996, providers who develop and operate Centers may have to provide a greater match or all of the program costs given the limited federal and state dollars available for social service programs. Chapter Six of this manual, therefore, provides some useful ideas on fundraising.

Security Issues

Another common concern is whether security can be adequately maintained in the Children's Centers. It will be helpful to know that security issues have been resolved in all of the existing Centers. All Centers have established comprehensive written procedures with court security personnel to provide appropriate and non-intrusive security for the Center. In each, there is a formal sign-in/sign-out procedure to ensure that children are released only to their proper guardian. All Centers require that the caregiver who drops the child off picks the child up, unless there is a written court order directing otherwise. Additionally, each Center has a telephone for staff use in the event of an emergency. Other security measures used in the existing Centers include:

- restricting access to the Center, except for admission and release of children to their caregivers;
- installing a "panic" button connected directly to nearby security personnel;
- using walkie/talkies to enable security personnel to alert staff when children are being dropped off.

These measures have minimized any security risks and been adequate to deal with any security problems that have arisen thus far.

Liability Issues

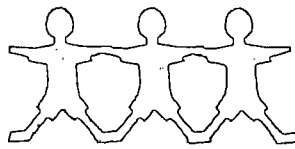
UCS requires the provider organization to procure comprehensive general liability insurance for the Center for no less than \$1 million for bodily injury and property damage per occurrence and \$2 million aggregate coverage. The provider not-for-profits have been able to secure this insurance generally as part of their overall liability insurance. The insurance policies are required to name UCS as an additional insured with a hold harmless clause.

Getting Your Space:

The Court Rule and Other Issues

The first task in getting your space approved is to determine how many square feet you will need to serve the number of children identified in your needs assessment. In determining this number, you should use the Judicial Commission square footage requirement of 35 square feet of primary activity space per child. The primary activity space required then should be the number of children identified in your needs assessment, adjusted for a two-thirds utilization rate, and multiplied by the 35 square foot requirement. You should then add in space for any non-activity areas, such as a food preparation area or an admissions desk. The Center should not, in any event, be less than a total of 150 square feet.

For example, if there are 24 children around the court per day, take 2/3 of that number to get 16 children expected to utilize the Center, and then multiply by 35 square feet to determine a Children's Center with a primary activity space of a minimum of 560 square feet.



Given the space constraints in many courts, it is likely that the space available will be smaller than the square footage anticipated. If you only have 420 square feet for primary activity space, divide by 35 square feet, and restructure your program to serve no more than 12 children at any one time, rather than 16. The experience of existing programs confirms that it is better to serve fewer children appropriately than more children in an overly confined space.

For a more detailed discussion of space and other design considerations for a Children's Center, please refer to Chapter 4, "A Safe, Supportive Place: Identifying and Designing Space for a Children's Center."

The Court Rule:

Helping You Make the Case for Your Space

After identifying the right space for your Center, you will probably have to negotiate for the space itself – either with the county government or with a private landlord. In both cases, you will have to negotiate first with the court for approval. While making the case for the Center to the court more broadly, you should refer to the recently enacted Rule of the Chief Judge that establishes a new Facility Guideline for Children's Centers in the courts (See Appendix B.). This court rule requires that space be set aside for a Children's Center in any new court construction or major renovation. This directive may or may not help you in negotiating for a particular space, but it does help a Supervising Judge consider the reality of a Children's Center in the long-term vision for the court. For those in jurisdictions outside New York State, you might consider working with your state court system to implement a similar rule.

Getting Ready

Once you have received approval to use a space from the court and county, you should begin to work on developing the space for use as a Children's Center. In New York City, Victim Services was able to call on the expertise of the New York City Department of General Services to design and renovate Children's Centers in New York and Richmond Counties. Erie County also performed the renovation work for its Center.

If renovation work is required on your site, you may need to develop architectural plans. The sooner this work begins the better. Once the plans are completed, you will need cost estimates for budgeting and fundraising.

Again, these and other concerns around identifying and designing a Children's Center are dealt with in greater detail in Chapter Four, "A Safe, Supportive Place: Identifying and Designing a Space for a Children's Center."

Care from the Community:

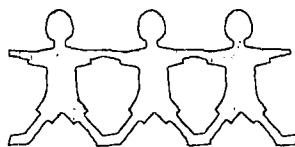
Identifying the Service Provider

Before selecting your service provider, you need to determine the most appropriate type of staffing for your Center. There are several models you may want to consider. Most Centers rely on a combination of both paid and volunteer staff. Other Centers are run completely with volunteer staff, although experience has shown that these operate best when supervised by a professional not-for-profit organization.

Once you have determined the staffing model to be used in the Children's Center, factors you should consider in selecting your service provider include:

1. The organization's previous experience in providing child care and related services;
2. The organization's interest in and commitment to the project;
3. The organization's administrative and financial stability;
4. The organization's previous fundraising experience;
5. The organizational structure and depth of the agency;
6. The organization's previous experience with the Family Court or other courts; and
7. The organization's connection to other service providers in the community to facilitate the connection of children and families to essential services and programs.

You should also be sure to check references.



Finding Your Bottom Line: Developing a Budget

With your space identified and approved and your staffing strategy and service provider selected, the Advisory Committee, in conjunction with the service provider, can begin to formulate the initial budget. This will include both start-up and operating costs. Your start-up costs will include any renovation costs and one-time expenditures for equipment, furniture and toys. A typical budget will include the following categories:

1. *Staff Salaries and Fringe Benefits*

This category will generally comprise more than 80% of your total operating budget. It includes all personnel and their salaries plus the cost of substitutes to cover staff vacations and illnesses. It also includes employment benefits such as social security, unemployment insurance, medical insurance, sick leave and vacation payments.

2. *Equipment*

This category includes durable items that should last a minimum of three to five years, such as tables and chairs, cribs and playpens. It also includes educational equipment such as easels, music carts, library display units and a play kitchen set. Office equipment and food preparation equipment, such as refrigerators, hot plates and crockpots are also included.

3. *Supplies and Materials*

This includes items depleted on a regular basis that need to be replaced such as general office supplies, education and program materials, food, medical kits and smoke detectors.

4. *Space Costs and Utilities*

These costs include real estate rentals, utilities and general liability insurance.

5. *Administrative Costs*

If using federal block grant funds from the Judicial Commission, administrative costs for those funds cannot be greater than 8% of the total budget. This

category includes the costs of any printing, copying, postage and shipping, telephone and fax and professional insurance.

6. *Miscellaneous Costs*

This category may include staff training and travel costs.

For an idea of what this all might look like (and what the bottom line is in at least one jurisdiction), an example of an initial budget is provided in Appendix F, along with worksheets to help you calculate your own budget.

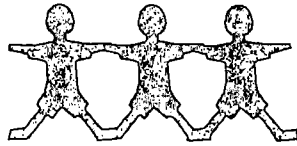
Money Talks:

Securing Start-up and Operating Funds and In-Kind Support

New York State Centers have been required to provide a 40% match to UCS funds of their total operating budget. Whether your program receives government monies or not, you will have to seek private funding and support for your program. Two excellent sources for one-time, start-up costs such as renovation and initial outfitting are local foundations.

You might also solicit donations of money, time and resources from members of your Advisory Committee and their contacts in the local community.

Local bar associations, community organizations, charitable organizations and local court personnel have provided substantial support in many counties. For example, in Albany contractors provided free materials for the renovation of the Center, and a local library continues to lend and even donate books. In Richmond County the local Kiwanis Club donated furniture and equipment for the new Center. These in-kind contributions have not only enriched Children's Centers, but have also made a serious dent in defraying start-up and operating costs. For a more complete description of fundraising strategies, you should turn to Chapter Six, "Fundraising," which also includes a fundraising case study from one Center that is already up and running.



Developing a Children's Center Program

With your approvals, space, child care provider and budget in place, you are ready to develop a high quality program that meets the needs of the children and families who come to court in your county. Your child care provider should take the lead in developing this program. Keep in mind that the Children's Center programs are very different from traditional pre-school and day care programs. While all the elements of a good education program are present, following a structured, set curriculum is, by the nature of a drop-in program, impossible. Developmentally appropriate practices need to be planned in the context of a population that changes constantly, sometimes hour to hour. This means that staff must be extremely flexible in their approach to children. The best programs are able to engage individual children in play while his or her caregiver is in the sign-in process. A wide variety of activities and materials should be available because of the diversity of ages and the children's development.

It is probably a good idea to visit a Children's Center that is already operating to get a sense of the procedures, pace and energy of an existing facility. Talking with staff will allow you to understand the day-to-day operations of a Children's Center in a much clearer way. In Chapter Five, "Designing a Children's Center Program for Your Court System," we will discuss in greater detail the policy requirements that the Judicial Commission currently sets out for the Centers it supports. As we have mentioned before, however, each Center has a distinctive feel, as well as a unique program that responds to the needs of the children and families in its community. Within the Judicial Commission's broad model, therefore, we hope you will conceive a program that makes sense for your court, families and children.

Developmentally appropriate practices need to be planned in the context of a population that changes constantly, sometimes hour to hour.



Getting It Done:

Two Case Studies in Making a Children's Center Happen

To give you a better idea of the process for starting a Children's Center outlined above, we describe the experiences of two jurisdictions as they planned, designed and began their Centers.

Monroe County:

Getting Started with the Help of an Advocacy Organization

The Children's Center in the Monroe County Family Court was a long time in coming. Interest in the idea of a children's waiting area began following a report of the Women in the Courts Task Force in 1986. This study urged local bar associations to work to establish these waiting areas throughout the State. In 1988 and 1989, after a series of meetings, the Rochester Association for Women Attorneys (RAWA) took up the initiative in its jurisdiction. Realizing that they needed to reach out to other groups in order to make the waiting area a reality, RAWA began to build a diverse advisory committee called the Court Waiting Area for Children Coalition. This group included representatives from Legal Services, the Monroe County Advisory Committee on Women's Issues, the Rochester Area Children's Collaborative (an advocacy group), the local YWCA, the Western New York Child Care Council and other community groups like the Red Cross, the Junior League and a domestic violence agency. Between 1990 and 1993, the Coalition, which also included concerned attorneys and other community leaders, grew and shrank, but always managed to advance the work of starting the Center.

One of the first things the Coalition did in 1990 was to meet with the County officials who lease the courthouse and whose concerns were fairly straightforward. "They said," remembers attorney June Castellano who spearheaded the Coalition "that the courthouse was

not big enough for the needs of the 1990's. 'Where do you want to put this thing?' they asked." Coalition members from the United Way and child care specialists then scoped out the courthouse and suggested that a manageable space could be built out of an existing (and quite large) waiting room. This proposal made sense as it displaced no one and still allowed families and their children to wait – although in a more engaged and constructive way.

The second County concern was money. With a tight budget, the County wanted to make sure the Coalition would cover the start-up and operating expenses. A fundraising subcommittee along with subcommittees for court liaison work, facility design and for drafting

the policy manual were formed.

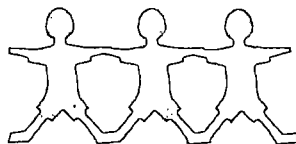
The fundraising group sought monies for the first two years of the waiting room's operation and depended primarily on the help of the Rochester Grantmakers Forum. Using the Forum's guide to local funders, the Coalition was able to match its initiative with

**Coalition members...
suggested that a manage-
able space could be built
out of an existing
(and quite large) waiting
room.**

several local civic foundations. In addition, the Coalition did widespread outreach to banks, family organizations, church foundations, grocery store chains, local utilities and the local United Way. These efforts were so successful that the Coalition did not have to rely on private donations from lawyers and their clients. (Given their close relationship to the project, says June Castellano, the group could have provided key resources had they been necessary.)

Overcoming Additional Obstacles

In addition to space and funding, the Coalition had to contend with staffing concerns raised by the court. The group had planned to staff the area with volunteers to keep costs down, but this idea was ultimately rejected by the court. The Coalition then went back to its members to find a lead agency to provide staff and services for the waiting area. Although one local child care agency showed early



interest, a more extensive, community-wide search selected Catholic Family Center. Catholic Family Center was extremely interested in the project, was well established, was a good fundraiser and had experience working with the court, but it had no experience in child care. Fortunately, Coalition members from the local YWCA and the Western New York Child Care Council agreed to train Catholic Family Center staff and get them up to speed.

Opening the Doors, Keeping Them Open

With the County's and the court's concerns met, the Coalition again went back to the Western New York Child Care Council for help in designing the space. The Council's experts worked closely with the County's architect, and the County government eventually agreed to cover the cost of the renovation, estimated to be several thousand dollars. Today, the 18' x 18' space, separated from the waiting room by eight-foot high partitions, includes built-in bookshelves, cubbies for children's outer garments and toy storage. Windows in the partitions look out onto the adjacent waiting area to increase security and to allow caregivers and children to remain in visual contact if necessary. Inside the space there is also a separate staff office for use when the Center is not open. With no bathroom in the space itself, children (with staff supervision) must use the public rest rooms across the waiting area. Although this is not optimal, the County has installed pull-down changing tables in these rest rooms to better accommodate caregivers and infant children.

With the space designed and ready, the waiting room opened in April 1992. Despite the early concerns, the court and County were very pleased. "Everybody thinks it's great now, even those who were skeptical," says Castellano. "They say, 'This is marvelous!'" The final hurdle to clear, however, was finding a steady stream of funding to cover operating costs from year to year. The Coalition's early fundraising efforts garnered enough support to keep the waiting room operational for close

to two years, but the Coalition hoped that either United Way funding or government monies could be secured to ensure the Center's long-term viability.

While some funds from the United Way and the Family Court budget were eventually obtained, the Coalition's funding concerns were assuaged when the Judicial Commission secured funding from the State's Department of Social Services to support Children's Centers across the State. In 1993, Monroe County responded to the first Request For Proposals sent out by the Judicial Commission and received \$31,456 in funding to transform its waiting area into a full-fledged Children's Center program. This funding has been subsequently renewed.

**"Everybody thinks
it's great, now, even those
who were skeptical," says
Castellano. "They say,
'This is marvelous.'"**

While the Coalition's work is thus mostly done, it still meets in the form of an Advisory Committee each quarter to stay abreast of new developments in the Center and to respond to developing needs. "The Center has had a long timeline, but it's worked out," says

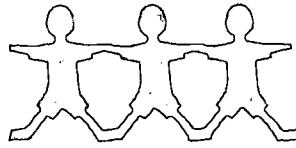
Castellano. "The time and the effort have allowed people to feel ownership of the project. Now, everybody has a stake in it."

Erie County:

Getting Started with the Help of the Court

Shortly after Judge Sharon Townsend came to the Family Court bench in January 1992, she began work developing a Children's Center. Judge Townsend had not yet heard of the work of the Judicial Commission. As an attorney she had seen the children in and around the Family Court, had seen that they were witnesses to inappropriate testimony and had seen that they were a distraction to their caregivers and judges alike.

Judge Townsend, therefore, took the idea of a child care facility to the Administrative and Supervising Judges of the court in Erie County. Hoping to build a team to work on the project, she began by meeting with the Clerk and Deputy Clerk of the Family Court and began



the planning process. That summer, the three traveled to the Children's Center in Monroe County, saw its waiting area in action and talked to staff from Catholic Family Center.

Following this visit, the three decided to form a Children's Center Coalition. Judge Townsend, in particular, was instrumental in inviting 20 people – including representatives from the County Executive's office, the United Way, the Junior League, attorneys' groups, a local battered women's shelter, local legislators, Family Court officials, County officials and others – to the Committee's first meeting in September. Eventually, this group grew to approximately 25, though the number varied from monthly meeting to monthly meeting.

Because judges in New York State cannot be involved with fundraising efforts, the Committee appointed two co-chairs, Sue Gaska, director of the local YWCA and executive director of the County's Commission on the Status on Women, and Judith Olin, a law clerk for another Family Court judge. These women in turn set up four subcommittees – space, funding, program and service provider selection – each with co-chairs. By the November meeting the co-chairs were in place and members of the Committee were asked to sign up for committee work. The co-chair strategy, reports Townsend, was effective because it prevented any of the work from overwhelming individual volunteer members of the committee.

Into Space: Cooperation, Negotiation

Initially, space was the biggest issue. Committee members did not want space right in the Family Court. They felt that children in the Center should be removed from any chance of witnessing inappropriate behavior in the courtroom waiting areas. Also, the group wanted families coming to the legal division of the court and to the hearing examiner to use the Center. The group's prime choice was four floors below the Family Court on the ground floor of the County court building across from an existing child care facility for County employees.

The Committee brought everyone involved with the space together and began a series of negotiations that lasted about a year. Other space needed to be found for the Credit Union, but the biggest stumbling block was security. An agreement was eventually worked out to have deputies from the Sheriff's office posted right down the hall. As part of the design of the facility, a button was installed to allow Center staff to contact the deputies from within the Center. The door to the Center was to always remain locked, and a glass window was installed to monitor individuals coming in and out of the Center. These and other procedures got the buy-in needed from the court, and the Center was able to begin renovating the space it wanted.

Down to Brass Tacks:

Building Budgets, Finding Funding

To cover the costs of the initial start-up, the Committee approached several local foundations for a series of small grants (that were eventually won) in the amounts of \$1,000-\$5,000. These paid for the cost of some equipment and planning expenses. No funds, however, were available to pay for the service provider who would be responsible for the child care staff. Undeterred, while fundraising, the Committee sent out a Request for Proposals to several local child care organizations. After a comprehensive review process, the Committee carefully considered three providers and chose the YWCA of Western New York to staff and run the Center.

In a bit of serendipity, the Judicial Commission made start-up and operating funds available for Children's Centers just two months after the Committee picked the YWCA. The Committee applied for these funds and was one of six counties to receive support. In order to gain the funding – which also necessitated a 40% match – the Erie County Children's Center agreed to abide by the Judicial Commission's program requirements and ensure that its child care environment met Judicial Commission standards.

With funding in hand, Erie moved ahead. Since the County owned the building, it negotiated a lease



directly with the YWCA. No rent was required, but the agreement set out the use of the space, as well as the Y's liability for the program and its staff. Indeed, the County was extremely cooperative and moved quickly to renovate the space and help the current tenants move into their new offices.

In April of 1994, the bright and freshly painted Center opened, with visitors from throughout the County and State – along with members of the media – in attendance. Today, the Center not only serves the children of Family Court in Erie County, but also children from the nearby City and Supreme Courts. Though the Center had been two years in development, and the result of hard work from scores of people, Judge Townsend reports, “It was the most fulfilling project I have ever been involved in. The stumbling blocks were overcome. We brought together the right people to make it happen, and because it was for the children, everybody was interested in it and it did happen.”

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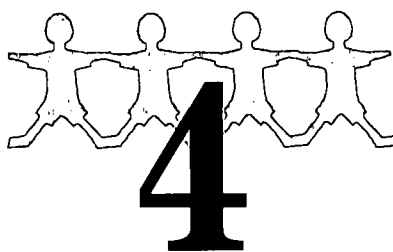
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Chapter



A Safe, Supportive Place: Identifying and Designing Space for a Children's Center

The following guidelines were prepared by Selim Itus, Ph.D., an architect and environmental psychologist, to assist with the site selection, design and furnishing of Children's Centers. Although applicable to new construction, these guidelines are developed primarily for Children's Centers to be sited within existing buildings. Also, since each situation is different, no single set of guidelines can cover the details of every project. Therefore, you should not hesitate to generate new ideas based on the guidelines, principles and architectural program presented.

Four Principles

The following are the four basic principles that should be considered while designing the Children's Centers:

1. The overall goal is to produce an environment that is comfortable and welcoming to children who lead stressed lives. The Centers should be selected, designed and furnished with this in mind.
2. There should be space for both active and quiet areas; the two spaces should be physically separated to the extent possible.
3. There should be separate areas for different age groups such as infants, toddlers and preschoolers.
4. There should be clear visual supervision within the Center and easy flow of traffic between and among areas.

Guidelines for Selecting the Location of Children's Centers

Size

A minimum of 35 square feet of open activity space per child is required for the Children's Centers. Usable primary activity space does not include spaces taken up by counters, circulation, staff space and

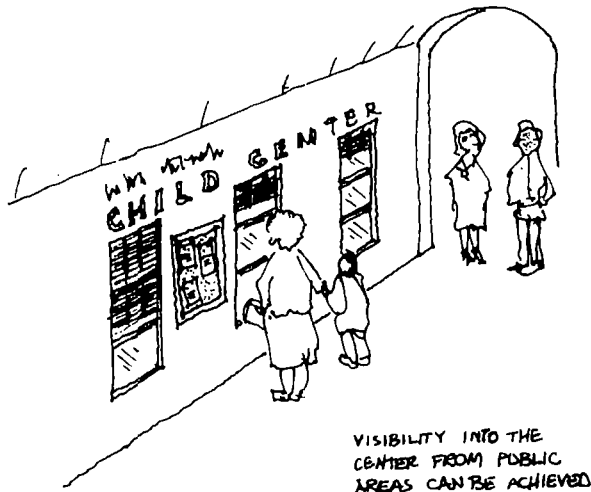
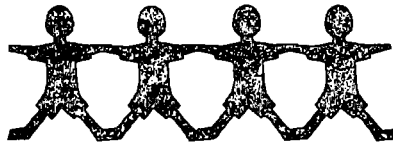
CALCULATIONS FOR SQUARE FOOTAGE FOR COURT CHILD CENTERS	MINIMUM	RECOMMENDED	GENEROUS
PRIMARY USABLE ACTIVITY SPACE	35 S.F. per child	42 S.F. per child	50 S.F. per child
SECONDARY SPACE (Staff areas, storage, etc.)	25 S.F. per child	38 S.F. per child	42 S.F. per child
TOTAL	60 S.F. per child	80 S.F. per child	92 S.F. per child

closed storage. (It should be noted that these additional spaces can add up to 25 square feet per child. Therefore in selecting space for a Children's Center, it is prudent to anticipate a total gross of 60 square feet per child.)

Regardless of the number of children being served, the Centers should not be less than 150 square feet. If space is available, square footage allowance for open activity space should be increased to 40 to 50 square feet per child.

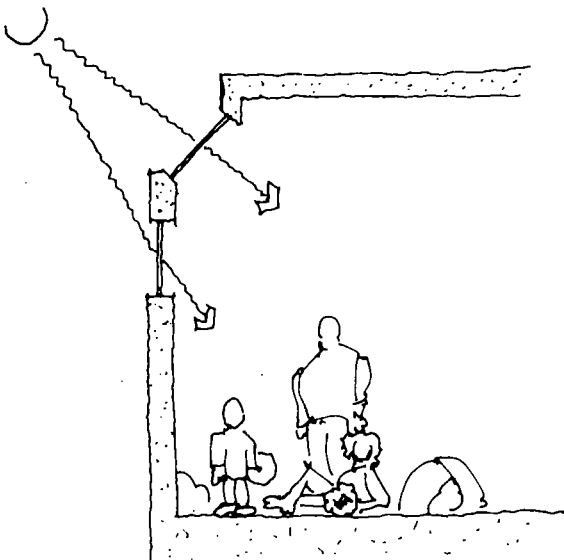
Accessibility

The Children's Center should be located close to the main circulation of the court building with easy access to the courts, bathrooms and waiting areas. Ground floor space is preferable as it ensures an easy evacuation in an emergency. If ground floor space is not available, fire codes should be checked since special precautions may be necessary. Directions to the Center should be clearly identified by signs located on the main circulation path.



Visibility

Visibility into the Center from the public areas of the court can be desirable, depending on whether the type of activity in the adjacent area is likely to put the children at ease or make them anxious. If the adjacent areas are extremely noisy or crowded, visibility to and from them is not recommended. Visibility into the Center from quieter lobbies and corridors can be desirable. This can be achieved by installing vision panels between the hallways, corridors and waiting rooms, and the Center. If desired, privacy in the Center can be achieved by installing shutters or curtains inside.



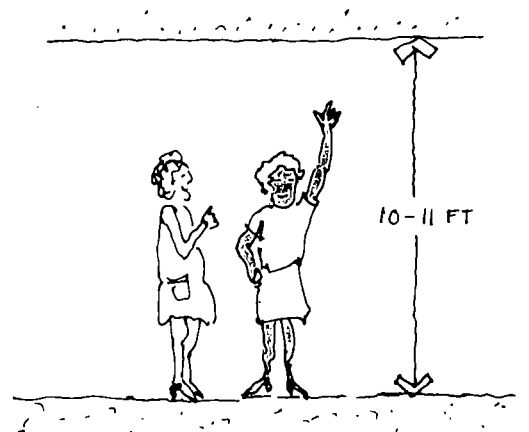
Lighting

Natural light is desirable in the Children's Center. Natural light enhances most of the activities that occur there including play, reading and art. It is also important for children to have visual access to outdoors so they can keep in touch with different aspects of nature, such as the weather and time of day. In addition, natural light helps to articulate interior space by highlighting different areas of the room throughout the day.

Access to natural light can be achieved through high windows or skylights. Windows overlooking the street are not desirable, especially if the Center is on the ground floor and the interior is visible from the street.

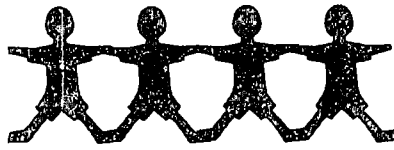
Ceiling Height

Spaces with low ceilings should be avoided. In a one-room Center, low ceilings tend to result in a sense of crowding rather than a sense of intimacy. Ceiling heights of 10 to 11 feet are ideal.



Noise

In some cases, noise can be a factor in selecting a site for the Children's Center. Very noisy areas should be avoided since they may interfere with children sleeping and playing. Similarly, excessive noise from the Children's Center can disrupt court proceedings. If the Children's Center is sharing a wall with a courtroom or judge's chamber, proper sound insulation should be installed.



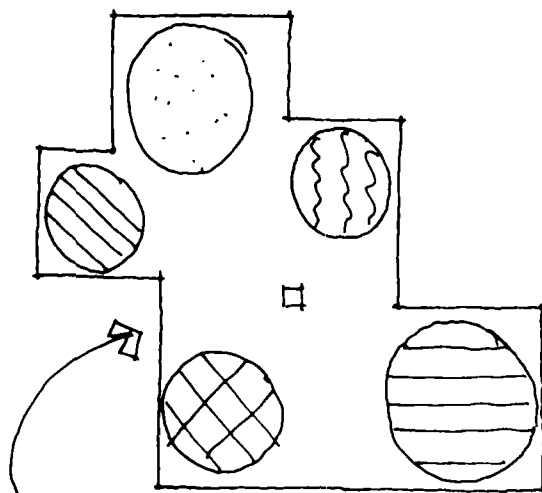
Storage

A large closet in or nearby the Children's Center is highly desirable for storing supplies.

Unique Spaces

In identifying space, do not discount any space because of its shape. Spaces that are irregular in shape may hold greater potential for a Children's Center than square rooms and should be considered as long as they allow good overall visibility.

Sometimes, parts of a space that at first seem disadvantageous can be creatively converted into successful activity areas. For example, a space left under the stairs can be used as a storage area or a half-enclosed playhouse. Small alcoves can be furnished to serve as quiet individual play spaces.



AN IRREGULARLY SHAPED ROOM
CAN BE USED TO GENERATE
VISIBLE BUT DEFINED ACTIVITY
AREAS

Handicapped Accessibility

The Center must comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Basic Architectural Program

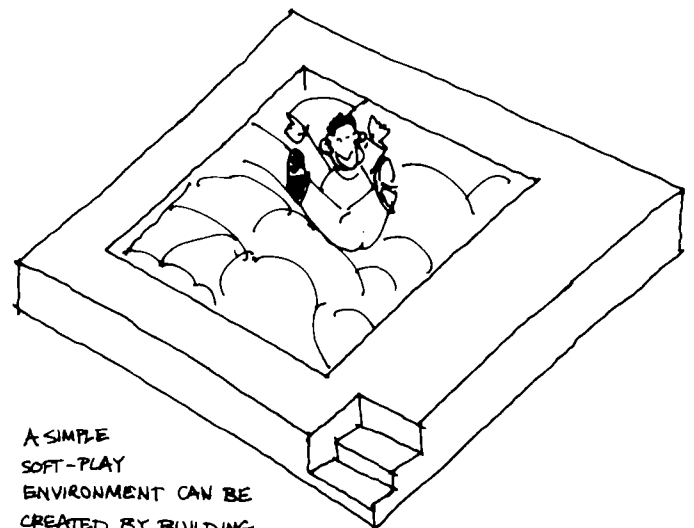
Organization of the Space

Since the age range of the children in the Center will vary, some form of separation is necessary. High dividers tend to block visual access for supervision and therefore are not desirable. The division of space should be achieved mainly by the arrangement of low movable dividers or furniture.

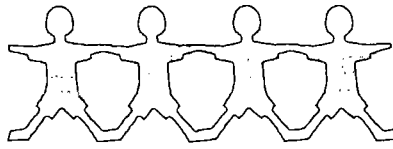
Whenever possible, small but visible activity spaces or niches should be created to allow one to four children to carry on a small group activity in a sheltered environment. These comfortably furnished spaces can also be used as "retreats" by individual children.

Soft Play Area

A play area for children up to three years can be defined and separated from the rest of the space as a "soft play environment." Cribs and changing tables should be adjacent to this area. Soft play environments can be created by assembling vinyl covered units sold by some school furniture manufacturers. Soft play environments also can be created by constructing a simple "play pit" for pillows. Loose playthings like stuffed toys should be provided in this area.



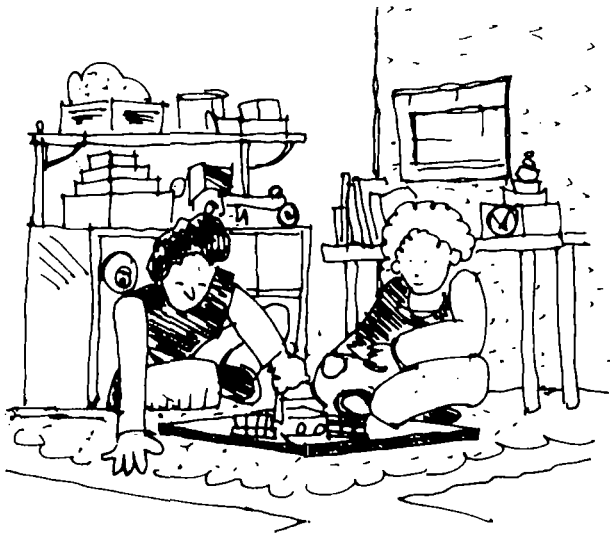
A SIMPLE
SOFT-PLAY
ENVIRONMENT CAN BE
CREATED BY BUILDING
A WOODEN PLATFORM &
COVERING IT WITH CARPET &/OR
VINYL.



Game Corner for Three to Six-Year-Olds

This space is for blocks and quiet play. If it is carpeted, most of the play can take place on the floor. If not, pillows and bean bag chairs should be provided. If the space allows, a child-size table with chairs can be included in this area. Storage shelves next to this space should have blocks, cards, puzzles, etc.

Allow 80 square feet for this space, which will be enough for two to four children. These type of spaces are most



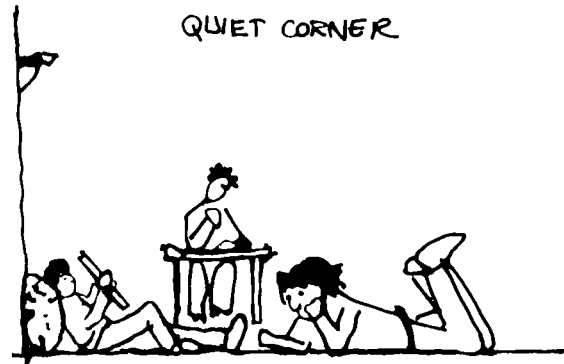
successful when they are small enough to give a sense of safety and security.

Quiet Corner

This space is for reading, drawing and other quiet activities. Since these activities are usually done on the floor, some comfortable cushions, mats and a book and magazine rack are enough to satisfy all the furniture requirements for this area.

Creative Area

If the space allows, a relatively messy "creative corner" can be designed with drawing easels and surfaces for playdough and clay.



Napping

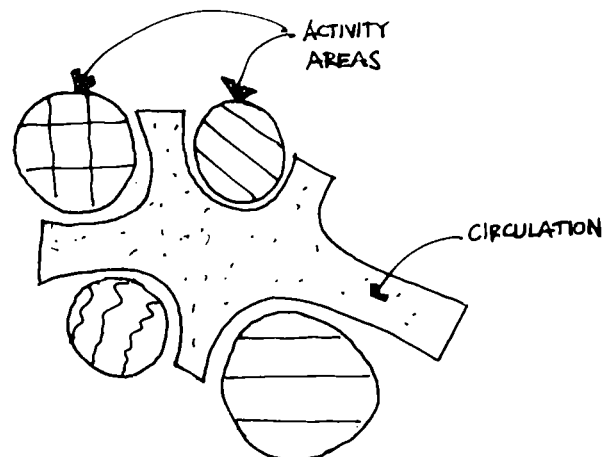
If the space allows, a crib can be placed close to the young children's soft play area. It should be away from more noisy activities.

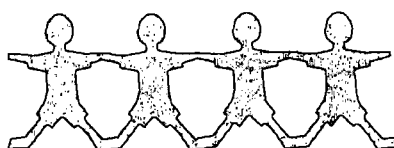
Portable cots or mats that are stored in a closed storage space can be used on the floor to increase the napping spaces.

Circulation

Space should be left to allow easy movement among the key areas of the room. Materials belonging to each age group should be adjacent to the area intended for them. Older children's circulation paths should not cross through the young children's play area.

It is advisable that a simple circulation analysis be done before finalizing the design. This can be done by drawing all the possible circulation paths on a scale sketch of the proposed Center.





Guidelines for Renovation and Construction

The cost estimates for construction will depend on the size and specific characteristics of the court building and the location selected for the Children's Center. In addition to the basic construction costs, there may be costs associated with the interior elements and furnishing of the Centers. For estimating the costs associated with these items, the following checklists can be used.

Furnishings and Equipment to be Considered:

- Built-in counters, sinks and shelving
- Telephone, fire alarm and intercom systems
- Built-in furniture and cabinets
- Hot plate, crock pot, sink and refrigerator
- Floor and window coverings
- Marker boards, bulletin boards and display cases
- Tables and chairs
- Mirrors
- Signage and graphics

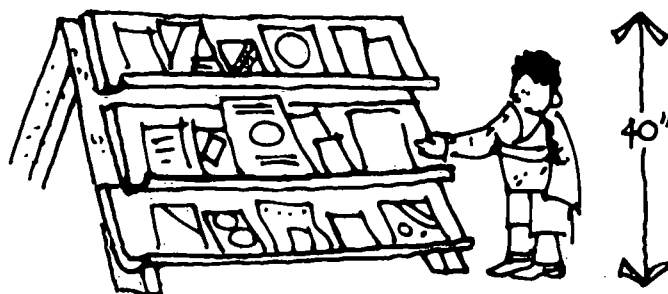
Furnishings - Staff

- Kitchen utensils
- Storage and filing cabinets
- Staff desk and chairs
- Wall clocks

Furnishings - Children

- Cribs
- Cots
- Bookshelves
- Rugs
- Cushions, bean bags, stuffed chairs
- Cubbies
- Low, movable dividers
- Movable storage units
- Rocking chair
- Upholstered armchairs or couch
- Changing table
- Playpen
- High chairs
- Activity tables
- Drawing easels
- Built-in steps with storage

STORAGE SHELVES FOR ITEMS SHOULD BE CHILD REACHABLE



Furniture

Movable and flexible furniture is preferred so that it can be rearranged as needed.

Wall space should be used for displays, announcements, artwork, etc. A separate display board for parents should be near the entrance.

Shelves for displaying and storing toys, books, objects, etc., should be within children's reach.

Portable bins can be used for toy storage.

There should be enough floor space left for children to play with blocks and other toys. The room should not be cluttered with furniture.

Ancillary spaces

Storage

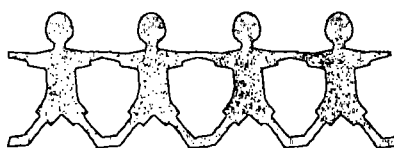
Every object, game, puzzle, etc., should have a fixed place.

Storage shelves and bins should be brightly colored to prevent dirty and dark storage.

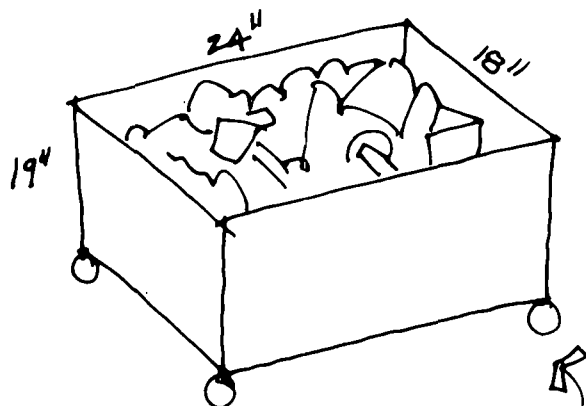
Avoid deep storage; it tends to increase clutter and make things inaccessible.

Open storage (shelves, bookcases, etc.) should be located right next to the play or activity areas.

Cots, mattresses and other big items can be stored in a cupboard or storage closet.

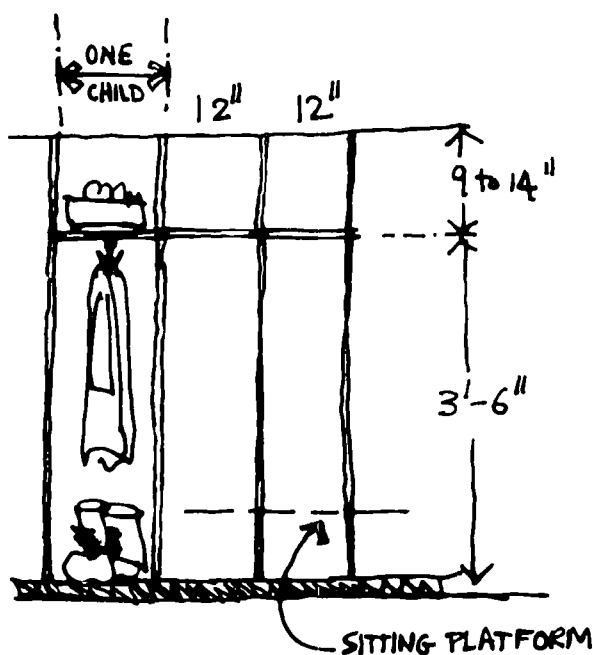


Cubbies



PORTABLE BINS
CAN BE STORED
IN A CORNER OR
IN CUPBOARDS

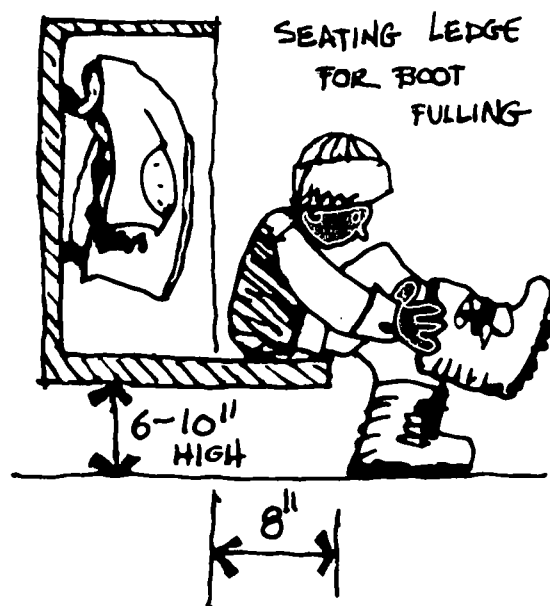
A space to store children's coats and personal items will be necessary. Cubbies will be ideal for this purpose, since they allow the storage of each child's belongings separately.

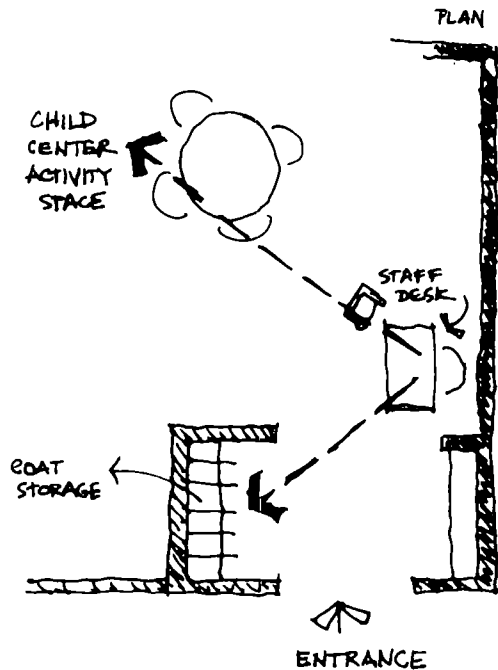
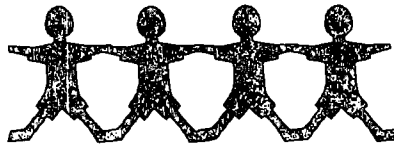


The space in front of the cubbies should be large enough so that the activity in that area does not block the entrance to the Center.

Cubbies should be in view of the staff desk.

A small seat in the cubby area is helpful if the children will need to take off or put on their boots. The seat needs to be approximately 10" higher than the floor. This sitting platform can also be an integral part of the cubby.





STAFF DESK SHOULD BE POSITIONED TO HAVE GOOD VISIBILITY OF THE ENTRANCE, COAT STORAGE & ACTIVITY AREAS

Staff Station

The staff station should be a strategically located desk with a clear view of the entire Center. It should also be placed so as to control the entrance and exit to the room.

A chair for parents should be located next to the staff desk to allow and encourage communication with parents.

Kitchenette

A kitchenette should include a counter, some cupboards for storing snacks, a hot plate or crock pot, a sink and a refrigerator. Ranges with open flames are not recommended.

If the space allows, an eating area with a small table and a few chairs will help the staff to restrict eating activity to one location, and avoid food and liquid spills elsewhere in the Center. This area can also double as the creative art area.

Children's Toilet Area

The children's toilet area should ideally be inside the Center and directly accessible from the activity areas. However, if this is impossible or very expensive to construct, it can be located outside the Center but should be nearby.

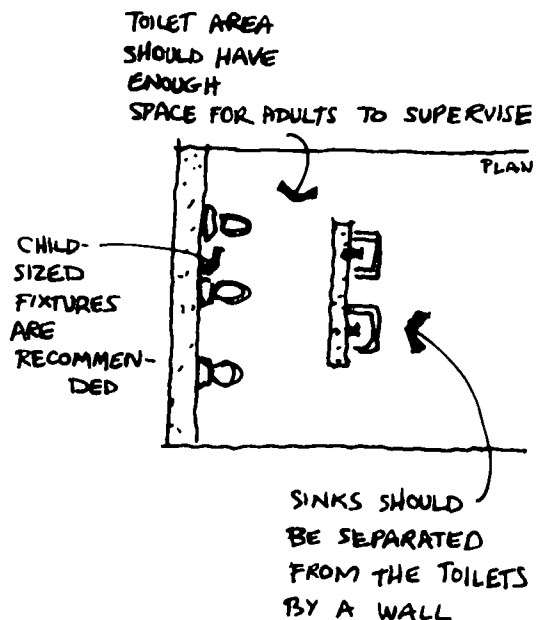
Toilet areas should be constructed so that they can be supervised by the staff. This is necessary to give children assistance when needed and also to control play that occurs in the toilet area.

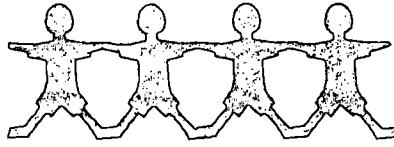
Child-sized fixtures are usually recommended for young children. These fixtures are available through most plumbing manufacturers.

In some cases, step stools and child-sized toilet seats can be provided for children to access adult sized fixtures.

Recommendations for the number of toilets range from one fixture per 5 children to one fixture per 15 children. On the average, one fixture per 10 children is recommended for Children's Centers.

In this area, there should be enough space for an adult to help children in the toilet.





If toilet stalls are open, washing facilities (sinks) should be separated from the toilet stalls by a low wall so that some privacy can be maintained.

Water temperature in the bathrooms and sinks should be regulated to prevent scalding.

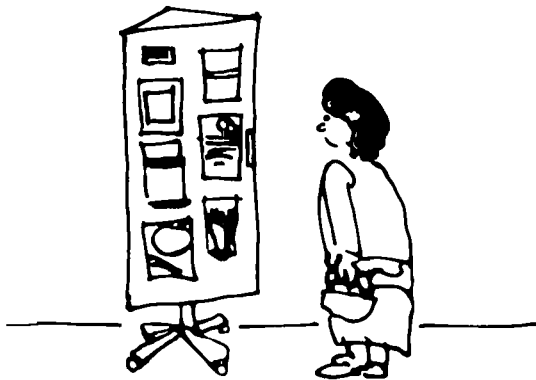
The recommended number of children per sink varies from one sink per 5 children up to one sink per 10 children.

Changing Area

A changing area, separate from play and eating areas, should be provided within the Center. This area can be used by the staff and parents. If room is not available in the Center, a changing table should be installed in a nearby bathroom.

Parents' Information Stand or Display

A display for parents with information on community services and available programs should be located close to the Center's entrance.



Selecting Play Equipment and Toys

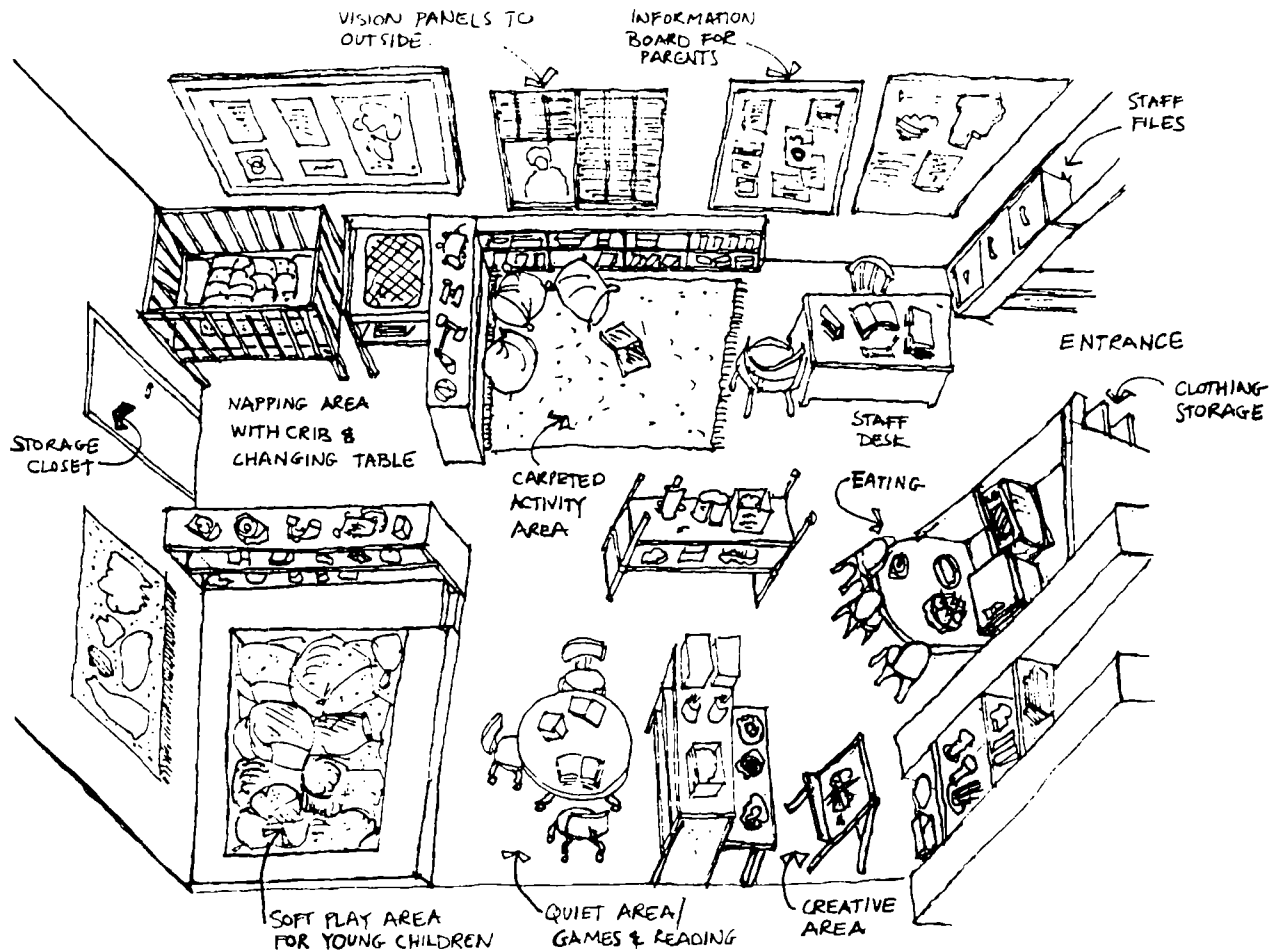
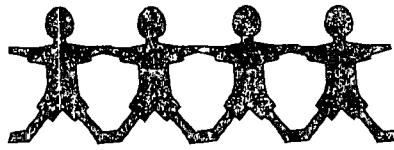
A range of toys should be provided that will involve small muscle and cognitive development, as well as social play.

Toys should be safe and child-scale, and allow for multi-use.

Several sets of the same equipment and toys should be provided. This will reduce conflicts and competition.

Include toys made from different materials: wood, plastic, rubber, metal, rope, etc., for sensory stimulation.

Available toys and games should promote positive images of different gender, racial, ethnic and cultural groups. Toy guns and war toys should be avoided.



Annotated Sample Layout

Space Layout for a Medium-Sized Children's Center

- 400 square feet
- 10 children

Safety and Maintenance

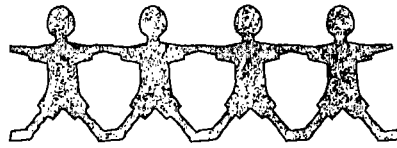
If windows and vision panels are within children's reach, tempered or laminated glass can be used instead of regular plate glass to prevent the possibility of breakage. It is also helpful to reduce the pane sizes by using vertical and horizontal mullions.

If regular glass is used on the windows, children's direct access to it should be limited by using wire mesh, guard rails, or grills of wood or metal.

The slats of cribs should be spaced no more than $2 \frac{3}{8}$ inches apart. The mattress should fit snugly and bumper pads should fit around the entire crib. The minimum side rail height should be 22 inches from the top of the railing to the mattress.

All electrical outlets that are within the children's reach should have electrical outlet covers.

Note that this section does not include a comprehensive listing of all the safety issues that may arise in a Children's Center setting. Please use a safety handbook published by a reputable organization such as the U.S. Product Safety Commission or the National Safety Council. Also you can contact the National



Association for the Education of Young Children or the American Academy of Pediatrics for safety recommendations. It is critical to understand that no checklist can be comprehensive; therefore, staff of Children's Centers should exercise caution and use common sense to avoid hazardous situations.

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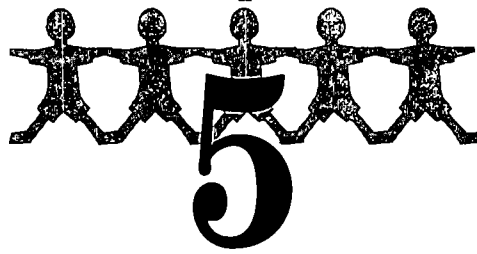
This is not a presidential record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

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Divider Title: _____

Chapter



Designing a Children's Center Program for Your Court System

During the last three years, the Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children (Judicial Commission) has focused on developing a statewide system of Children's Centers in New York State Courts. While recognizing that each court and each county is different, it is essential that all Children's Centers provide a separate, safe, supervised and enriched environment for high quality, drop-in child care. Supervision should be the responsibility of well-trained staff and volunteers. Policies and procedures should be clear and their enforcement ensured. Each Center should first achieve these basics and then explore appropriate ways to link the children and families at court to needed services. This is, of course, an ongoing process. We hope that the following suggestions (and our requirements for Unified Court System (UCS) funding in Appendix A) will help you develop an excellent Children's Center program as efficiently as possible.

Building Blocks:

Components of a High Quality Children's Center Program

The foundation for a high quality program begins with a suitably designed space. There should be enough space allocated for each child served. The furnishings should be safe and age-appropriate. There should be storage for toys and materials that is accessible to children as well as a place to keep children's belongings. These and other considerations are described at length in the previous chapter, "A Safe, Supportive Place: Identifying and Designing Space for a Children's Center." With the space taken care of, how should the program operate?

Operations: Staff, Policies, Outreach

As part of its Request for Proposals, the Judicial Commission formulated a set of requirements with which all New York State jurisdictions must comply in

order to receive funding from UCS. As mentioned above, these requirements are included in Appendix A. Derived from these guidelines, the following are a set of suggestions to consider in developing a high quality Children's Center program.

Structuring Your Program

Your program should provide, at a minimum, a separate, safe, supervised and enclosed environment for children who are in court in connection with matters involving them or their caregivers.

Make a Schedule that Fits the Court's Schedule

The Children's Center's should be staffed by paid employees and/or volunteers, as needed, and open during the court's hours of operation.

Set Capacity

Establish a maximum capacity for your Center that is within local fire and safety codes and that ensures an adequate and comfortable amount of space and resources for the children and families at the Center.

Ensure Sleeping Arrangements

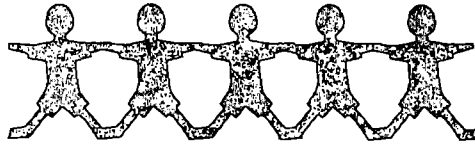
Make sure there are cots or mats and cribs available so that children can rest comfortably. Children should not be allowed to rest or sleep on the floor for obvious health reasons.

Gather Age-Appropriate, Multicultural Materials

There should be a sufficient quantity and variety of toys, books and age-appropriate materials available. These should be selected to promote positive images of different ethnic, racial, cultural and gender groups.

Be Clear with Caregivers

When parents or caregivers come into the Center, provide them with a written set of their responsibilities while their children are in the Center. These should



be available in English and Spanish (and other languages if appropriate), explained verbally to the entering caregiver, and posted conspicuously in the Center itself. These responsibilities may include staying in a designated waiting area of the courthouse so staff can contact them at any time, bringing identification tags filled out at intake when picking the child up and knowing where to meet staff to pick up children in case the building needs to be evacuated due to fire or other emergency. In addition, when entering the Center, a parent or caregiver should complete an intake form (See Appendix G) that includes:

- Caregiver's Name
- Address
- Telephone number
- Location in court
- Emergency contact person with phone number
- Relationship to the child
- Information on the child including: name, special needs, allergies and recent childhood illness.

Keep It Confidential

Appropriate written procedures should establish how this information will be kept confidential, so families can feel confident about making personal data available to Center staff.

Establish Outreach Procedures

While some staff may feel perfectly comfortable approaching families in and around the court, it is a good idea to set out an outreach procedure that notes specifically good times to do outreach in the court, and perhaps some talking points for staff to use. In addition, a similar set of procedures should be developed to help staff handle families when the Center is operating at capacity and can not take additional children. For example, the Yonkers Family Court Children's Center follows these procedures for dealing with overflow.

"The Center will notify caregivers to register children turned away because the Center was filled to capacity. This will take place in the following manner.

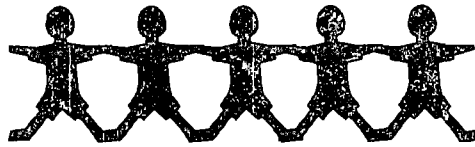
1. A sign describing the capacity of the Center (6 children) will be posted at the entrance to the Center.
2. Caregivers wishing to register children after capacity is reached will sign their names in numbered ORDER OF ARRIVAL. Caregiver and child will proceed to the fourth floor waiting room.
3. When additional spaces become available, the next numbered caregiver(s) will be notified.
4. A Center staff member will go to the fourth floor Court Officer on duty, via the back stairs, with the name(s) of the next numbered caregivers. The staff member will announce the name(s), and children with caregiver(s) will use the elevator to the third floor.
5. Staff members may return via the back stairs.
6. There are occasions when the caregiver is unwilling to travel to the third floor to register a child (e.g., the caregiver's case is about to be called). When appropriate, a staff member will register the child in the fourth floor waiting room and bring the child down the stairs to the Center."

Make Available Referral Information

Information and referrals to programs and services that meet the needs of children and families using the Children's Center should be displayed clearly. Pamphlets, brochures and application forms, when appropriate, should come from WIC, the food stamp program, Head Start, the local child care resource and referral agency, local child care programs, SSI and early intervention programs, among others.

Establish an Advisory Committee

An Advisory Committee for the Center, which should meet at least quarterly, will provide needed guidance on programmatic and fiscal issues and will explore and recommend opportunities to link the Center with available community resources. The Committee should include at least one parent from the community, a local lawyer or law guardian, and representatives of the County Department of Social Services, local Department of Health, the court or courts which will be served by the Center and local day care providers.



Safety First:

Guidelines for Establishing a Safe and Secure Children's Center

Given the potential for volatile behavior in the emotionally charged cases heard by the court, the safety of children, caregivers and Center staff should be a priority when envisioning a Children's Center program.

Again, while the Judicial Commission sets out a series of safety requirements for its providers (see Appendix A), the suggestions below (derived from the requirements) should help you maintain a secure Center.

When Possible, One Person Drops Off, Same Person Picks Up

The greatest chance for security problems occurs when a child is picked up following a caregiver's hearing in court. Therefore, the caregiver who brought the child to the Center should be the same person who picks the child up. When this is not possible, the caregiver should designate in writing another person to pick up the child. Of course, when there is a change in custody, there should be a written court order that directs that the child be picked up by a particular person of authority.

Fire

Make sure that your Center meets the local fire codes, has a smoke detector and suitable size fire extinguisher. Check the Center and its surrounding areas for any possible fire hazards.

Develop an Evacuation Plan

An emergency evacuation plan should be written and then given and explained to all caregivers when they drop off their children. Staff should be trained in this plan, and it should be clearly posted in the Center. A gathering place should be established and explained to caregivers.

Get Security Personnel Involved Up Front

Work with security personnel in the court to develop safety and security procedures. This will not only ensure that court staff are comfortable with the arrangements and that they and the Center staff can work together effectively, but also allows you to get advice in developing comprehensive security procedures in and around your Center.

Bathroom Duty

To ensure children's safety and comfort, staff should accompany children to and from the bathroom.

Do a Safety Audit

Once your site is designed and built, and all the materials are in place, look through the facility to ensure that rough edges, stairs, storage spaces, etc., do not pose any unnecessary safety risks. Once the program is operating, closely observe children in and around the Center. Note any potential dangers and establish procedures and policies to address them.

At Least One Telephone for Security

The Center should have at a minimum one single-line telephone set aside to communicate with security personnel.

Health, Nutrition and Cleanliness:

Caring for and Feeding Children in the Center

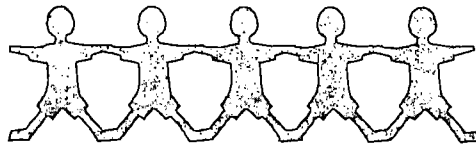
In addition to keeping your Center safe and secure, you will need to develop policies and procedures that ensure that you and your staff can deal with medical problems and maintain a Center that is sanitary and healthful. Here are some steps in the right direction:

Emergency

In the case of a medical emergency, staff should know first, how and where to obtain care quickly and second, how to notify caregivers in a way that is supportive and does not add stress to an already stressful situation. A set of written procedures will give staff confidence to act professionally in difficult situations. Staff should also be trained in first aid and CPR.

Have a Rest Area for Sick Children

You should not require your staff to accept a child who is ill. Still, sometimes an apparently healthy child develops symptoms during the course of his or her stay. Therefore, make sure that there is a space that can double as a rest area, separate from other play areas and children.



Have a First Aid Kit on Hand

You should have a fully stocked first aid kit that should include at a minimum: first aid information, assorted bandages and band-aids, gauze squares, a roll of two-inch sterile gauze, adhesive tape, a child's thermometer, an ice pack, antiseptic solution, a dosage/measuring spoon, syrup of ipecac, sealable plastic bags, scissors, soap, tweezers, cotton balls and swabs and disposable gloves. Universal blood precautions should be observed at all times.

Diaper Directions

There should be a written set of diapering procedures, including the use of plastic gloves and disposal procedures (inaccessible to children), to ensure that proper sanitary conditions are maintained within the Center.

Keep It Clean

All rooms, equipment, supplies, toys and furnishings – including cribs and sleeping mats – should be kept clean at all times. Tabletops, floors and cabinets should be washed down at the end of each day. Toys should be soaked in or wiped with a mild disinfectant or diluted bleach. Bed or crib linens should be changed after each child uses them. Staff should thoroughly wash their hands at the beginning of each day, when they are dirty, after going to the bathroom, after handling food, after any contact with a bodily secretion or fluid and after any diaper change. Similarly, staff should make sure that children keep their hands clean to reduce the chance of spreading disease among children and staff.

Written guidelines describing these and other procedures should ensure that the Center's rooms, equipment, supplies, toys and furnishings (including cribs and mats) are kept clean at all times. Similarly, these guidelines should ensure that the Center is always free from dampness, odor, vermin and trash.

No Drinking or Smoking

There should be no smoking of any kind in or around the Center. Similarly, no alcohol or controlled substances should be permitted in the area.

Snacks and Feeding

Healthy snacks should be provided for children who stay in the Center for more than three consecutive hours or where circumstances dictate. Center staff should establish written procedures to ensure that snacks are prepared and stored in a safe and clean manner, and that all eating plates, cups and utensils are disposable and safe for children. For the youngest children, staff should obtain instructions for infant feedings. All bottles should be labeled with the child's first and last name.

Staffing:

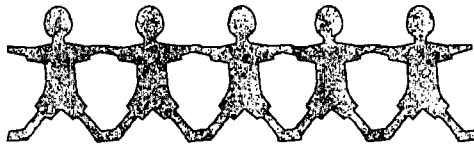
Providing the Best Supervision Possible

To ensure that your staff is qualified, responsible, in good physical and mental health and of good character, you should develop and use clear, discreet, written hiring procedures for both paid staff and volunteers. Similarly, once your program is operating, you should develop and use a set of operational procedures designed to encourage safe, quality supervision.

Hiring Staff

There are a number of helpful things to do to ensure successful hires. First, ask any applicant, whether paid staff or volunteer, to authorize your access to any personal records in the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment. If you do not hear from the Central Register promptly, you might hire the person on an interim basis pending the response. Second, ask for the names of three references (with addresses and phone numbers) who are not relatives to attest to the applicant's habits, character and personal qualifications. Third, have the applicant provide a sworn statement indicating whether he or she has ever been convicted of a misdemeanor or felony. No person convicted of a serious crime against a child should be hired.

These questions may seem intrusive, but these procedures will help to ensure the safety of the children served and to protect you and your Center from liability. Indeed, some jurisdictions may require staff to be fingerprinted when hired.



A Written Staffing Plan

Centers and their service providers should have – and in New York State, are required to provide – a comprehensive staffing plan which includes all staffing and supervision procedures.

Supervising Staff

Center staff should be supervised on a regular and ongoing basis by the service provider organization. At a minimum, this means monthly on-site visits and weekly telephone contacts. More frequent contact is preferable and will generally lead to better quality of care.

Ensure Quality Supervision

Children require constant attention, and staff can become distracted. Therefore, a minimum of two staff should always be on-site while the Center is open; and competent, sufficient and direct supervision of children in the Center must be provided at all times.

If the Center is running near capacity, more staff may be required to provide an acceptable level of supervision. Procedures should be outlined in writing to provide substitute care in the case of medical or other emergency.

Two other policies are necessary:

While high school volunteers may provide important service and additional staffing, supervision should be provided at all times by someone 18 years or older. Second, corporal punishment must always be prohibited at the Center.

Training is Key

To ensure a level of competence and sensitivity at your Center, at least one full-time staff person should have a minimum of two years of training and/or experience in early childhood development. Staff who have worked in Head Start settings or who have training

to deal with children and families in crisis are often good candidates for staff positions. The more staff with this kind of preparation the better.

For those staff or volunteers hired without this previous experience, the Center should provide training in the principles of early childhood development. Training should also be provided on child abuse and maltreatment, child sexual abuse, domestic violence identification and prevention, first aid and CPR, and, of course, the judicial process and the policies and procedures of the Center.

Be Clear on Child Abuse

Any confirmed incidence of child abuse or maltreatment by staff or volunteers must be grounds for immediate dismissal. Written policies should be developed to ensure that any suspected incidence of abuse or maltreatment by either caregivers or staff is reported to the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment.

Set Up Communication with the Court

To ensure good relations and enhance security, each Center should have an ongoing mechanism for judges and court personnel to communicate directly with the service provider regarding any issues or problems regarding the Center's operations.

Volunteers:

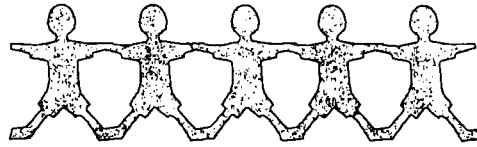
Recruitment and Other Considerations

When starting your volunteer program, there are a number of things you can do to ensure a successful experience for the volunteers, the children and for your program. Consider the following:

Have Clear Goals and Objectives for Volunteers in Your Program

Have written job descriptions for volunteers as well as written policies, which should be given and explained to volunteers before they start.

...at least one full-time staff person should have a minimum of two years of training and/or experience in early childhood development.



Stress the Importance of Confidentiality

Most volunteers who stay with the Center will become goodwill ambassadors for your program in no time at all. It is particularly important that the volunteers understand that all specific information about the children, families and the Center remain in the Center. Perhaps the best way to achieve this is to spend a few minutes prior to lunch and at the end of the day to debrief the day's activities with volunteers and remind them about the importance of confidentiality.

Good Volunteer Programs Take Time to Organize and Administer

If there is not enough staff time at the Center or at your agency to spend on recruitment, orientation and proper training of volunteers, you may want to consider training a volunteer to take on this function. You will continue to be responsible for all staff, volunteers included, but you will be relieved of some of the more time-consuming tasks.

Don't Fall into the "Oh-Well-What-Can-You-Expect-They're Volunteers" Trap

People generally live up to your expectations. If you clearly state your expectation that volunteers are an integral part of your program, and that you count on them to make your program the most effective it can be, you will be more likely to develop an excellent corps of volunteers.

In the initial stages of development for some Centers, recruiting volunteers has been one of the most difficult tasks. From the Centers' collective experience, we would like to offer a few suggestions on where to find solid volunteers for your program:

Start by Approaching Groups Whose Purpose it is to Recruit And Screen Volunteers

These include: the Junior League, the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), the Volunteer Action Council (VAC) and Foster Grandparents.

Other groups to consider are:

- **Local Schools and Colleges**
Both high schools and colleges may have credit bearing courses for internships or service-learning.
- **Churches and Synagogues**
Their weekly bulletins are a great way to get your message out to an often interested audience.
- **Bar Association and Women's Bar Association**
Several of these groups have active volunteer groups that help out at the Centers.
- **Your Advisory Committee**
Although they may not be able to volunteer themselves, they can be extremely helpful in getting the message out to their organizations and friends.
- **Your Local Newspaper**
If necessary, consider an ad, though those responding may be looking for a paid position.
- **Child Care Resource and Referral Agency**
Your local group may have a list of persons interested in volunteering at early childhood education programs like yours.

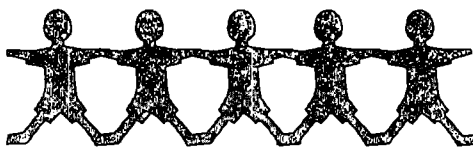
From Operations to Volunteers:

A Children's Center Blueprint

These ideas represent a kind of blueprint for a safe, supportive and high quality Children's Center program. Each Center, of course, will have additional needs, challenges and solutions. It is helpful, therefore, to consult with Centers already in operation to see how they deal with safety, health, staffing and other issues. Indeed, there is nothing more useful than to visit a Center in person, see the operation yourself and watch staff as they work.

Clear, Precise, Written Policies Work

As you have probably noted from the lists above and requirements in Appendix A, we place a great deal of stock in clear, written policies. When these policies are handed out and gone over closely, we have found that



expectations are clear and misunderstandings about procedures few. Parents feel more secure knowing what to do in the case of emergency, for example. For our Centers, we have adapted some tips on writing policies from *Healthy Young Children: A Manual for Programs*, written by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). This handbook encourages service providers to keep in mind the following questions in order to write specific and detailed policies.

- Why should the task be done?
- Who is responsible for doing it?
- What is the process?
- How will the task be done?
- When will the task be done?
- Where should the task be done?

For example:

"The Children's Center director will purchase all items for the first-aid kit and review its contents each month to be sure all supplies are available. The kit at all times will contain first aid information, assorted bandages and band-aids, gauze squares, a roll of two-inch sterile gauze, adhesive tape, a child's thermometer, ice pack, antiseptic solution, dosage/measuring spoon, syrup of ipecac, sealable plastic bags, scissors, soap, tweezers, cotton balls and swabs and disposable gloves. The first-aid kit will be stored out of children's reach on the top shelf in the bathroom above the sink."

Policies for Children's Centers should be developed on a wide range of topics including, but not limited to:

- Responsibilities of the caregiver while children are in the Center
- Intake and discharge of children
- Confidentiality
- Security
- Staff health records
- Staff training
- The environment of the Center

- Sick children
- Emergency preparedness
- Reporting injuries
- Nutrition/food handling
- Child abuse/maltreatment
- Resource/referral for children and caregivers

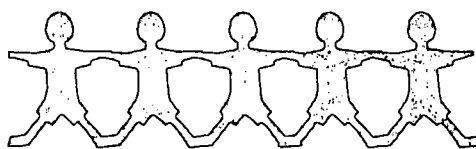
Enriching Children's Experience in Your Center

Once the policies, procedures and basic operations are in place for your Center, you should look for ways to enhance your quality of care. While you or your service provider may have extensive experience delivering supervised child care, a Children's Center program provides challenges for even the most seasoned professionals. Here are some thoughts developed in collaboration with Anne Mitchell, a child care expert, regarding the drop-in nature of Children's Centers, working with children under stress and providing a culturally competent system of care.

Challenges of a Drop-In Program

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of a Children's Center program is that children and their families drop in and out very quickly and return infrequently. From an operational standpoint, this requires a better ratio of staff to children than a regular child care setting, at least one to five and probably one to three with infants. This is necessary because the social structure developed over time in a regular program is not available to help manage the group in a drop-in setting.

Some staff time will need to be deployed to register children immediately when they come in. In a drop-in setting, all the necessary information – for example, allergies, likes and dislikes, special needs, where their caregivers are going to be – must be gathered during intake. Staff must provide a friendly atmosphere in and around a Children's Center to make families and children feel at home immediately. If they don't make a good first impression, a caregiver is not likely to leave the child. During outreach in the waiting rooms or around the Centers, staff should be friendly, outgoing and reassuring. As Albany director Mara Contreras



puts it, they should put on a “friendly face” and provide as much information to caregivers as they require. When a caregiver and child come to the Center, a staff person should spend a few minutes not only taking intake information, but also getting a sense about the child from the caregiver. Once in the Center, a child should be assigned to a staff person and if possible to a group of children. This will help the child feel a sense of inclusion more quickly.

At first sight, the Centers themselves should be visually pleasing. They should be well lit and have lots of colorful posters and toys. The Center environment should say, “This is a safe environment where my child will be well taken care of and will have fun.” If you visit a Center, you will see how quickly many children run in and begin playing with toys or supplies. If a child is happy with the environment, generally the caregiver will be happy too.

Still, separation – at first from parents and then later from Center staff – and its attendant anxieties are endemic to drop-in programs. Nine to twelve-month-old children in particular are very likely to be afraid of strangers and may cling to their parents upon entering a Center. Older toddlers may be more outgoing. Recognizing a child’s age and developmental stage, therefore, will go a long way toward managing and assuaging a child’s discomfort at joining – and later leaving – the Children’s Center.

Separation can also take its toll on staff in a drop-in setting. Child care workers in an ongoing child care program will deal with separation at the beginning of the year and when a new child enters the group, but not on a day-to-day basis. So being comfortable and knowledgeable about separation issues is very important for a staff person working in a drop-in situation. Also in a Children’s Center, staff have but a short period with each child, so staff who work in this kind of setting need to be very committed to individual children. They must get satisfaction from working with a child in the here and

now, not from seeing a child grow over time – as you would in an early childhood program where children come on a continuing basis.

Dealing with Children Under Stress

Going to court can be stressful for adult caregivers, and this stress is often communicated to their children. In addition, some children who come to the Center may be coping with hunger, poverty, homelessness and even violence. Given a child’s short stay in the Center, identifying the source(s) of her or his ongoing life stresses is not generally possible. Still, staff should be sensitive to various challenges children may be facing before and after their time in the Center.

Staff should tune in to each child, to empathize, to have some insight into who the child is and what he or she is dealing with. Staff should take their clues from the child, being very responsive, without forcing it, without being overly happy or enthusiastic. Children need staff to be calm, caring and warm.

Staff should tune in to each child, to empathize, to have some insight into who the child is and what he or she is dealing with.

Staff should expect a range of behavior from children and their families that may veer outside expected norms. For example, some children may respond to the stress of their day in court by becoming very aggressive, knocking things over, yelling and getting into fights. Others may become withdrawn, and still others may cope with the situation by looking out for siblings and acting protectively – well beyond what we might expect from children their age. Parents may exhibit a similar range of behavior, including conduct and decisions that may be negative and atypical, again a result of their stressful situation.

Center staff, therefore, should put a premium on creating an environment that is physically and emotionally safe and as predictable as possible. Of course, this is an environment that is appropriate for all children, no matter what their situation. In the context of the swirling realities of the court, however, Centers should create a kind of temporary “refuge” for children while their families deal with their legal affairs. The accent should be



on providing a homelike and nurturing environment, rather than an overly stimulating one. Soft furniture, like the chairs and couches suggested in Chapter 4, for example, go a long way in creating a place where kids can be comfortable. Staff, however, are responsible for setting a tone of warmth, caring and comfort.

Currently, we are not aware of any guide that discusses these kinds of issues pertinent to drop-in settings in a comprehensive way. However, we have found two excellent sources with specific suggestions for programs that serve children in related, though not completely comparable, settings.

Responding to Children Under Stress: A Skill-Based Training Guide for Classroom

Teams, which is available from the Head Start Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families in Washington, D.C.

Klein, T., Bittel, C., and Molnar J., "No Place to Call Home: Supporting the Needs of Homeless Children in the Early Childhood Classroom," which appeared in the September 1993 issue of *Young Children*. This can be found at your local library or obtained from NAEYC.

Given the needs of your particular children and Center, you may be able to adapt some of the principles included in these sources to enrich your quality of care.

Be Sensitive to Issues of Race, Ethnicity and Gender
Children's Centers and their staff should operate programs that are sensitive to the cultural backgrounds from which their children and families come. The first step in this process is to recruit a diverse staff that reflects the population being served. In many localities, bi-lingual staff are a must. In the same vein, recruit your volunteers from diverse sources – for example, from local churches and synagogues, from ASPIRA or the National Black Child Development

Institute, from the Junior League, and from the Foster Grandparents program – to ensure your volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds. A diverse staff can have other benefits as well. Some Center staff report that their diversity is an aid when it comes to their outreach efforts around the court. Regardless of their race, ethnicity or gender, all staff and volunteers at the Center should receive sensitivity training in multiculturalism and diversity.

The Center should have materials and activities that are multicultural and promote a positive self-image for all boys and girls who enter. If the pictures on the walls have faces of real people of all different races, ethnicities, genders and family structures, children

and families get the message quickly that their children's race, ethnicity and gender will be recognized and valued. These materials set the tone for an environment of mutual respect.

**Children's Centers provide
a tremendous opportunity
to link some of the neediest
children and families to
vital services.**

**Phase Two:
Connecting Children and Families
with Services**

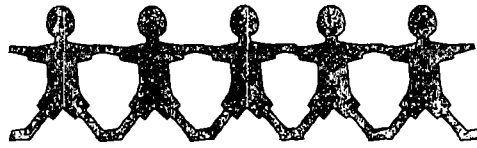
Once your staff is delivering the kind of high-quality child care discussed above, you should begin to work on what we call Phase Two, on ways to build your Center's capacity to link children and their families to needed services. Our Family Court survey revealed that many families are not receiving services (including early childhood health, educational and nutritional benefits) to which they are entitled. Thus, when fully operational, Children's Centers provide a tremendous opportunity to link some of the neediest children and families to vital services.

At a minimum, each Center should have information about services and programs displayed near the intake desk, so caregivers can see them and take them if relevant. For Children's Center staff, whose main concern remains with providing safe and secure child care for those children in the Center, there is usually limited time to talk with families about these services and get a sense of their needs. Still, low impact and time-effi-



cient ways to begin the referral process can be developed. Particularly when filling out the discharge forms, positive statements about how well the child did in the Center can easily lead to questions like, "Is he in Head Start?" "Are you enrolled in WIC?" or "Do you know about SSI for children with disabilities?" Staff can then provide a brochure and a phone number, and note these referrals on the intake forms.

To expand this referral process, the Judicial Commission is developing a number of strategies designed to strengthen the link between Children's Centers and social service providers who can direct children and families toward any variety of services they need. As mentioned in Chapter One, Centers whose child care programs are operating and stable are testing three approaches – outstationing workers from other agencies, hiring generic workers and deputizing staff to enroll families in services. Children's Centers in Albany County and Richmond County have a Family Service Worker from the local Head Start program outstationed full-time at their respective Centers. At the Children's Centers in Kings, Erie and Monroe Counties, providers are hiring staff solely responsible for linking families to services. All Center staff statewide are trained and deputized to enroll families in the Lifeline telephone service since having a phone is critical for families to connect with other services. Additionally, Center staff are trained to begin the enrollment process for the WIC program.



A Day in the Life of Two Children's Centers

Finally, to give you a better sense of a Children's Center program, we would like to elaborate on our programmatic suggestions. First, we will take you through a day with Westchester County Center staff members Jaqueline Pezzula and Evelyn Ramirez. Then we will describe the experience of the Children's Center in New York County's Civil, Criminal and Housing Court through the eyes of a number of children.

It's the People:

A Day in the Life of the Westchester County Children's Center

Located one floor below the Family Court in downtown Yonkers, the Westchester County Children's Center is the smallest center in the Judicial Commission's statewide network, just 216 square feet. But as we know, good things can come in small packages. Making the most of its modest size, the Westchester County Center—run by director Jaqueline Pezzula and staffed by Evelyn Ramirez, as well as several volunteer Foster Grandparents—runs an effective program that serves nearly 1,000 children and their families each year.

A day at the Westchester County Center generally begins with outreach. While Pezzula readies the Center for operation, Ramirez goes upstairs to the Family Court's waiting room with a small poster describing the Center, complete with polaroids of its play spaces. When families and children see the pictures, some jump at the option. Others are reluctant. Often, Ramirez must spend time convincing some parents that she is not from child protective services, that children will not be "observed" or even taken away in the Center, only cared for. Ramirez's Spanish helps to allay the concerns of Latino parents, many of whom are unfamiliar with the court system.

When a parent and child come into the Center, the parent will work with Pezzula or Ramirez to fill out the

intake form. In the meantime, one of the Foster Grandparents will usually come over, talk to the child ("as only a grandmother or grandfather figure can," says Pezzula), find a toy or teddy bear and help the child get comfortable in the Center. Staff seek to reassure parents about the care provided by the Center. While other Children's Centers in New York handle custody transitions, Westchester does not, so again they tell parents that the Center is there solely to provide child care services while the caregiver is in court.

Reinforcing the Center's role and building this trust quickly is critical. When parents leave their children, they should not have to worry about them. They should be able to concentrate on their court business.

Seeing their children well cared for allays many of their concerns. And Yonkers staff pride themselves on their ability to build a quick and effective rapport with the children.

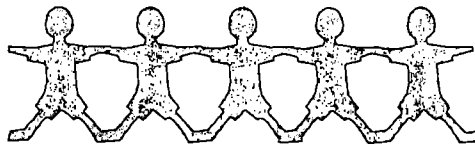
"You can have as many toys in the Center as you want," says Pezzula, "but what the children really need

is a friendly face, a person who is there for them if they have any questions, any fears, anything at all."

At the Westchester Center, there are also plenty of toys, games and art supplies. "It's like their own little treehouse in the courthouse," says Ramirez. Children's paintings are up everywhere on the walls. During his or her stay, each child makes his way from station to station, from the easel to the little sandbox to a quiet storytelling area. Or they stay put and simply paint the entire time they are there. It is up to them.

Of course, staff are there to help. Unlike a traditional child care setting where children know the routine and know what's in the room, staff must show children the Center's various activities and toys and then sometimes show them how to use, say, an etch-a-sketch. There are two pet hermit crabs who generally get formal introductions. For four-year-olds and older, collage is always a favorite. There is a toy kitchen

**"During their stay...
we follow their energy."**



to play in. Staff show children all the options. When children return to the Center a second time, it's a different story. They go right for their favorites.

"During their stay," says Ramirez, "we follow their energy. If they want to keep playing, if they want to paint, we stay with them, we follow their lead. If they say, 'I want to play in the kitchen,' we go into the toy kitchen.

"We have to play it by ear. If a mother comes in and says, 'we've had a crazy day,' we might sit down and read the child a story. If a child is sleepy, she or he may take a nap on a cot that can be unfolded in the corner. In the back, we have a crib for smaller children. You get used to being flexible, targeting each situation differently, appropriately."

If a child is still in the Center after two hours, staff will serve a simple snack – apple juice, graham crackers, Cheerios – or perhaps a banana a parent has left. Any allergies or sensitivities have been noted on the intake form. The Center closes for lunch, when the court is not in session, and the parents pick up their children and eat with them then. Sometimes, a child will return for the afternoon session, though most will not spend the whole morning and afternoon at the Center.

When parents come to pick their children up, staff try to gauge their reaction. "We have the court schedule," says Pezzula, "so we know why they are here. We'll ask casually, 'How did it go?'" Staff give the parents time to respond, to relieve a little of their anxiety. They also look for clues to possible referrals.

"When parents come in," says Pezzula, "they are usually worried about their case, so it doesn't make sense to tell them about services they might need or use. But when they get back, things have often been settled. It's much easier to go into referral mode."

She points to a fixture attached to the inside of the Center's door that has brochures in English and

Spanish for a wide variety of programs – WIC, Head Start, various hotlines and day care services, a support group for single parents and more.

"If something comes up in talking about the case, we point them to a support group or a shelter number," says Pezzula. "And we generally try to tie the child in as well. For example, 'You know, Ashley is doing so wonderfully here. She's so into everything. You know she would probably do well in day care.'"

Following a generally short conversation on these matters, a parent will take the information and fill out the discharge form. Here again is another opportunity for referrals. "If I see that they have checked that they are on

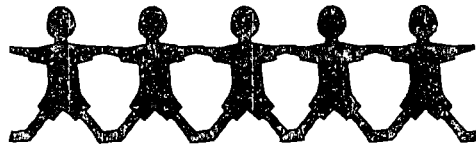
public assistance," says Pezzula, "but not on WIC, I point them there. I look at what they're here at the court for. I look at the intake form. I look at the kid. If he's four years old and looks like he might be comfortable in school, I'll suggest Head Start. We try to put two and two together."

**Concentrate first on
getting the right people
– staff and volunteers – who
truly enjoy being with chil-
dren. It's the people... who
make the program.**

To help make the referrals quickly and efficiently, staff have a list of key area services (for food pantries, for children and youth services, for homeless and housing services, for phone services, etc.) as well as a book of child care and early childhood programs they can refer to. Pezzula generally makes two suggestions, not more, so as not to overwhelm the caregiver. Sometimes, she says, "I'll follow-up with a phone call."

The final challenge is to help the child transition out of the Center. Often the child is having fun and is reluctant to leave. Local libraries and publishers have donated books to the Westchester Center, which are sometimes given as going away presents. Of course, a child can take her or his artwork when she leaves. Other times, when a parent walks in, the child is ready to go. The parent simply has to carry the child out.

In thinking about the program generally, Pezzula and Ramirez offer this advice for others considering a Children's Center: Concentrate first on getting the right



people – staff and volunteers – who truly enjoy being with children, then concentrate on the toys and resources for children to play with. Find a diverse group of people to staff the Center. Having younger students, professionals and older volunteers can create a nice mix and a positive image for the program. It's the people, they say, who make the program.

Focusing on the Children:

A Few Moments in New York County's Civil Court's Children's Center

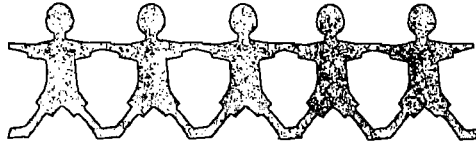
In the drab and crowded hallway outside the Children's Center in New York County's Civil Court (a building that houses Civil Court, Housing Court and some Criminal trial courts), lawyers confer with their clients. Men and women, most in suits and dresses, are reviewing documents, checking the court dockets, reading paperbacks, waiting. People swirl in and out. The door to the Children's Center, which is run by Victim Services, opens right into this hallway, but the Center seems almost a world away, a colorful and active, mini-nursery school in the midst of a very adult world. It is 10:15 in the morning, and there are two staff from Victim Services, two volunteers and eight children in the Center. With music playing lightly in the background, twin girls are painting in red smocks, their hair corn-rowed and studded with red barrettes. Holding large tempera brushes, they wear little gold earrings. Perhaps five years old, one is missing her front teeth. Both girls work intently at their easel, a blue drop cloth protecting a yellow and red linoleum floor. Both share a similar taste for bold colors and geometric forms.

Another little girl in a pink wool sweater, who has just come in, is reluctant to join in with two other boys at a table coloring. A Victim Services staff member approaches her, squats down, and, in Spanish, asks her what's the matter. "This 'school' is new to her," reports the worker, who notes that 75 percent of the families at the Center are Spanish-speaking. The little girl decides against the Center and goes back out into the hallway with her Mom. The staff member smiles, and tells the girl, again in Spanish, to come back if she wants.

A few minutes later, she returns and joins the others. Meanwhile, one of the boys who was coloring goes to play with some legos. A small girl in a pink smock, jeans and little gold earrings plays at a play kitchen. One staff person floats among the children, praising a picture, reassuring another child – "your mother will be back" – shepherding another from the coloring to the blocks. Staff's presence, in general, is watchful and low-key. Every five minutes or so, like talented jugglers, they redirect children's energy and attention. They genuinely like being with the children, and it shows. In the back of the room, a toddler in a crib plays an imaginary game with a worker, who holds a toy clown. The toddler is all smiles.

The door to the Center opens, and the twins' mother enters and says that it is time to go. Staff ask the girls if they would like to keep their paintings or if they would like to leave them. They say they are not quite finished. Their mother turns to fill out the discharge forms. When she has completed them, the girls still want to stay. Staff tell them more firmly it is time to go, but temper their disappointment by giving their paintings to their mother to take home. The girls are still reluctant to give up their smocks, but a staff member reaches into a closet and gives the girls two books that have been donated. Now the girls are ready to leave. They wave goodbye as they make their way back into the hall.

As they go, another little girl arrives wearing a corduroy jump suit and clutching a blue teething ring. While one staff member goes through the intake procedure with her mother, another comes over and asks her what she wants to do. She wants to paint, she says. The staff member gently helps her on with the smock, and the girl gets started on a fresh piece of paper. With staff encouraging her painting, she is oblivious to her mother, still filling out the intake form. After filling out the form, parents generally stay for 15 minutes or so, but engaging children immediately into activities eases the eventual difficulty of separation. Sometimes



there are tears after a caregiver leaves, but after five minutes or so, children usually blend into the action. If a child's crying persists, staff can go up and find her or his parent – the relevant court information is written on a yellow pad as well as on the intake form.

As the intake concludes, there is constant motion in the Center. The tone is bright, upbeat, busy, the children preoccupied with their activities. In an hour, each child may do five separate things. One of the boys coloring takes his picture of a yellow and blue jaguar up to a staff person to hang up with the other pictures around the Center. He moves over into the little kitchen area, where he starts to make a play salad. Another reconstituted group of two boys and two girls sit at a table with a staff person playing with magnets and paper clips.

At 11, the children put their activities aside, go to the bathroom to wash their hands, and sit down for juice and cookies. Each gets two cookies, a cup of apple juice and a napkin. The room is quiet for the first time in almost an hour. One of the boys goes to the bathroom to blow his nose. Some eat, some don't, and staff clean up quickly. Shortly, they get some of the children settled to hear a story. They read "The Three Little Pigs" in English, though the staff member translates some in Spanish and constantly checks the group's comprehension. For the most part, the children are attentive, but from time to time a child will spin around to see what else is happening around the Center. Their attention spans are as brief as their energy is unrelenting.

Just as the story finishes, one boy's father comes to take him. The boy says, "I don't want to go." Filling out the discharge form, the father replies, "I know, but you have to go." The boy decides he wants his picture of the jaguar, previously hung on the wall. Staff peel it off and roll it up. He takes it in one hand, takes his father's hand in the other, and together, they make their way back out into the bustling waiting room and out the court's doors.

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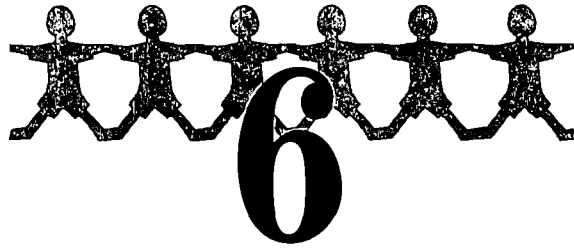
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Chapter



Fundraising

One of the major obstacles to starting a Children's Center is money. That's why, since 1993, the Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children (Judicial Commission) has worked to provide government funds to help develop Children's Centers throughout New York State. Nevertheless, Children's Center grantees have to provide a significant, 40% match of their total budgets to this government support. These funds can come from foundation or corporate support, individual donations or in-kind contributions of goods and services (e.g., volunteer services, contracting and construction work, donations of books, toys and educational materials).

The Judicial Commission has been successful in tapping a variety of federal and State funding streams. For example, we have received funding from the federal Child Care Development Block Grant program (CCDBG), the federal Family Support and Preservation program (FS/FP), and the federal Child and Adult Food Program (CAFP). All of these federal funds are administered by State agencies. In New York, the CCDBG and FS/FP are administered by the State's Department of Social Services. The CAFPP is administered by the Department of Health. To inquire about potential federal funding, you should contact similar agencies in your state government, although your state may handle these funding streams differently. In addition to federal support, Centers have also received State funds from the New York State Unified Court System and from the State's Child Care program.

If you are trying to establish a Children's Center without State funds or outside of New York, effective grassroots and local fundraising will be even more critical to your success. While all communities are different, we trust that at least a few of the suggestions below will be helpful as you build your Center's resources.

From the experience of our Children's Centers, we have found four major sources of community funding for our programs.

- *Local Foundations*

Corporate and private foundations in your area that support programs for children and families are excellent sources of start-up and planning funds. Most, however, do not provide for longer-term operating expenses.

- *The Local Bar Association and Other Lawyers' and Judges' Groups*

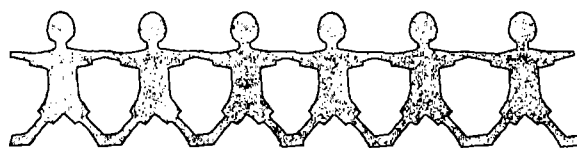
Several Centers have been started with the help of judges and lawyers who have served on Advisory Committees. Concerned with children in the court, many judges and lawyers are willing to donate time and/or money to the project. Lawyers groups may run their annual fundraiser or cocktail party as a benefit for the Center. In New York City an association of Judges donated \$250 of their group's own money to benefit the Centers.

- *Local Businesses, Contractors and Social Clubs*

These are good sources for start-up funds, and especially good places for in-kind, community-based support for the project. Quite often, contractors have donated their services, or delivered them at cost; businesses have donated toys and other materials; and fraternal organizations, like the Kiwanis Club, have donated furniture and books. Some Centers have recruited enough in-kind support to reduce the expense of their Center to little more than the cost of staffing.

- *County Government*

The County Youth Bureau and the County Department of Social Services may be able to provide a reliable source of longer term funding for staffing, operations and other Center-related services.



Eight Basics of Fundraising

While identifying who to request funding from may be a relatively easy task for those involved with starting a Children's Center, designing a strategy and asking for funds may be daunting. To help those with limited experience in this area, we would like to present briefly eight fundraising basics, adapted from Joan Flanagan's excellent *The Grass Roots Fundraising Book*. These should get you on your way.

1. Maximize Your Efforts

Before embarking on any fundraising campaign or event, consider all the possibilities. Which idea – holding a dinner/dance, making a set of personal appeals, writing grant proposals – has the best chance of raising the most money? Especially when using volunteer time to raise money, you need to be efficient.

2. Find the Donor's Personal Interest

Before approaching an individual, group or foundation for money, try to figure out why they might give or even why they have given to similar causes in the past. If you are not sure, try to get some background information on the person through friends, colleagues or at the local library.

Of course, holding a fundraiser (e.g., selling holiday cards or t-shirts or staging a dinner or reception) immediately provides a source of interest – the cards, the t-shirts, the food or the party, respectively. The better you can identify an important reason that a group or an individual would care about your program, the better chance you will be successful and get a contribution.

3. Make It Personal

Even in this age of telecommunications and technology, the best fund-raising appeals are personal and face-to-face. As Flanagan points out, "it is more pleasant and more profitable to discuss the program live than over the phone or in a letter." When working with corporations or foundations where you don't have a personal connection, get their funding guidelines to make sure they will fund a Children's Center or at least some aspect of your program, then write a short, one-page proposal letter and

ask for a personal meeting. Follow-up with a phone call and try to arrange a time for a meeting. If the meeting is encouraging, then write the full-fledged proposal. As with any meeting with a potential or current donor, write a prompt thank-you note.

4. Use Your Network

If you have built a large and diverse Advisory Committee, you should have personal contacts with a broad range of people and businesses in your community. At an early meeting of this group, ask members to identify potential supporters for the project and then ask your committee to make commitments to approaching them. If making it personal is key, you have to start with, "Whom do we know who can help?"

5. Be Prepared

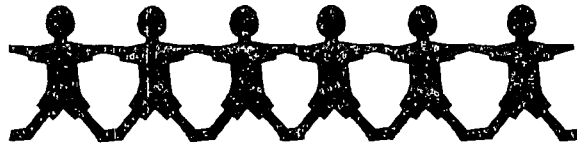
Before approaching a potential donor, make sure you are comfortable talking about the Children's Center program and that you are familiar with any surveys or needs assessments that your group has gathered. Conversely, know as much as possible about the person or group you will be approaching. Again, this preparation will help you identify a potential donor's self-interest, that is, what will make that person give.

6. Be Specific, Direct and Passionate

Know what you are asking for – Is it a certain amount of money? Is it an in-kind donation? – before you meet with a potential donor. Make sure to relate the specific donation – free dry wall, for example – with the broader vision of the Children's Center, which is to provide a separate and safe environment for children away from their caregivers while they are in court. If you are nervous about asking others for money, practice with a friend. Remember, if you don't ask, they can't give. Don't imply your request, ask it directly. And don't be afraid to show your passion for helping children and for the project. If you don't look like you believe in the effort, few people will join you.

7. Conquer Fear

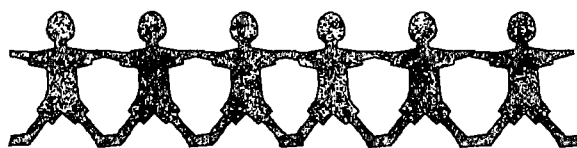
A lot of people are afraid of asking others for money. They fear that they will be rejected and will lose face.



This is common, but must be overcome. Pair experienced fundraisers on your Advisory Committee with less experienced fundraisers. Talk about people's fears frankly and allow them to tell stories about past fundraising efforts that were successful and unsuccessful. Then move people from their fears to your strategy – why Children's Centers are important and how you are going to raise the needed funds and services to make one possible. Stress that even if you are rejected, you can gain important information for future fundraising queries, especially information about why people are or are not excited by the idea of the Children's Center.

8. *Get the Book*

If you like the sound of the advice above, you might invest \$15 in *The Grass Roots Fundraising Book: How to Raise Money in Your Community*. Often referred to as the fundraising "bible," it's written by Joan Flanagan and published by Contemporary Books in paperback. Ask your local bookstore to order you a copy if they don't have it in stock.



Learning By Example: A Fundraising Case Study

Perhaps the best way to learn how to raise funds for your Center is from successful efforts in other jurisdictions.

All of our Centers have had to struggle at one time or another with this issue, and you should take heart that they have all developed creative and successful strategies for getting the funding they needed to start and operate a Children's Center. The example of our Albany Center is instructive.

Albany: Lawyers Lead the Way

Helena Heath, an Albany attorney, helped engineer the effort for a Children's Center and was instrumental in gathering an Advisory Committee to work on the Center. In the aftermath of the Rodney King trial in Los Angeles, Heath attended a Conference on Racism in the Criminal Justice System. While participants from the Albany community and throughout the State's legal system addressed a wide range of issues, a number of people at the Conference talked of the need for a child care facility that would allow litigants to address the court with greater dignity.

In response to this concern, Heath contacted Chief Judge Judith Kaye and the Judicial Commission.

Following the lead of other successful efforts around the State, Heath helped bring together judges, attorneys, a representative from the local YWCA and members of the local child care community to work on the project. She helped the group organize various subcommittees to seek space, gain court approvals and do fundraising.

Since judges in New York are not allowed to do fundraising, Heath and fundraising subcommittee chair Elaine Pers, another lawyer, formed the Friends of the Albany Children's Center, and through this non-incorporated, but separate group pursued a series of different fundraising strategies.

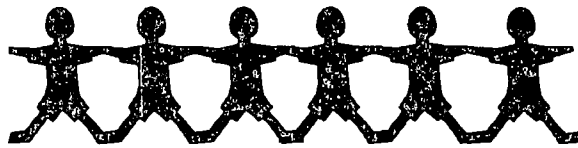
Since this fundraising group, which eventually grew to six working volunteers, was spearheaded by lawyers, it not surprisingly went first to the New York State Bar Association, which allowed the Children's Center to hold a fundraising reception at its headquarters. Invitations, printing and postage were all donated by a local legal

products services firm. The Advisory Committee contributed names for the mailing and followed up with phone calls to ensure a good turnout. In all, the event was a success, raising more than \$3,000.

In addition to the reception, Heath and Pers did broad outreach to various community associations including the local Chamber of Commerce's Capital Leadership Program and the Law Guardian Association. They applied to a community development fund run by a consortium of local banks. They even convinced a local radio station, WGY, to include the project in its Christmas Wish Fund, which raised \$50,000 for several area initiatives for children, including the Children's Center.

When the process of developing the Center moved along further, the Friends of the Albany Children's Center applied for a grant from the New York State Bar Foundation, which funds projects in and around New York's legal system, and were awarded \$10,000 to pay for part of the Center's renovation costs. To complete the work, Nancy Mahar, then Executive Director of the YWCA contacted contractors, electricians and carpenters who were hired through a bid process that enabled the Center to get the work done at substantial discounts. Once involved with the project and caught up in its mission to help children and families, contractors even agreed to donate the sheetrock and wiring supplies needed. This approach reduced the cost of the project by one-third. The building's landlord took care of the plumbing and window installation in the basement space, and a local bank donated all of the Center's furniture. A local bookstore donated toys and books. The cumulative effect of all these efforts not only reduced the Center's start-up costs, but also provided a rare opportunity for groups from throughout the community to work together and develop a sense of pride in making an important service available to the families and children who come to court.

In late 1993, the Albany program received funding from the Judicial Commission, but its various fundraising efforts made it easy to meet the 40% match the applica-



tion for these funds required. When the Center eventually opened in the Spring of 1994, people and groups from throughout the Albany community were justifiably proud to have made important contributions toward transforming the idea of child care in the Albany Family Court into a real life Children's Center.

APPENDIX A

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

A. The children's centers must provide quality drop-in child care for children who must be in court in connection with matters involving them or their caregivers. The center must be in separate, safe and enclosed environments in or contiguous to the court or courts to be served. All children's centers must comply with the minimum facility, program and staffing requirements set forth below.

B. Facility Requirements

1. A minimum of 35 square feet of open activity space per child shall be provided in the children's center with a total minimum square footage of 150 square feet. Areas used for administrative and ancillary purposes, such as staff offices, storage spaces, bathrooms and hallways must not be used in calculating the 35 square foot per child requirement.

2. The provider shall ensure that the children's center, its toys, furnishings and equipment are safe and age-appropriate for children.

3. The provider shall ensure that the children's center is maintained in good repair and kept clean.

4. The children's center should be neatly arranged and well organized. Storage for toys, books and materials must be provided and must allow for appropriate access by children. Secure storage for children's personal belongings must be provided.

5. An area of the children's center shall be designated for infants and toddlers so that they may be separated from older children.

6. A desk, telephone and list of emergency phone numbers shall be provided for staff.

7. Toilet facilities for children should be provided in the children's center whenever practicable or must otherwise be accessible.

8. Changing tables must be separate from eating and play areas and should be installed in the children's center whenever practicable or must otherwise be accessible in a nearby bathroom.

C. Program Requirements

1. Operations

a. The programs shall provide, at a minimum, a separate, safe, supervised and enclosed environment for children who must be in court in connection with matters involving them or their caregivers.

b. The children's center shall be open and staffed by paid employees and/or volunteers, as needed, when the court is open.

c. The provider shall establish a maximum capacity for the children's center. (See Section B, Facility Requirements)

d. The children's center must have a sufficient quantity and variety of furniture, toys, books and materials appropriate to the age of the children served. Toys, books and materials must be selected to promote positive images of different ethnic, racial, cultural and gender groups.

e. Suitable arrangements shall be made so that children may sleep and rest comfortably. Children shall not be allowed to rest or sleep on the floor.

f. The provider shall set forth in writing the responsibilities of caregivers while their children are in the children's center. The rules, written at least in English and Spanish and other languages as appropriate, must be given to the caregiver and explained upon the caregiver's entering the children's center. The rules must be posted conspicuously in the children's center.

g. The provider shall obtain from caregivers upon their entering the children's center a written signed statement on a form provided by UCS indicating: the caregivers' name, address, telephone number, relationship to the child, and location in court; an emergency contact with phone number; and information on the child including the child's name, special needs, allergies and recent childhood illness.

h. The provider shall establish written procedures for encouraging caregivers who are in court with their children to use the children's center.

i. The provider shall establish procedures for notifying caregivers who have been turned away from a children's center operating at maximum capacity when space becomes available in the children's center.

j. The provider shall make readily available information and referrals, where appropriate, regarding programs and services, which address the service needs of the children and families using the children's center, including WIC, the food stamp program, Head Start, the local

child care resource and referral agency, local child care programs, SSI, Early Intervention program and any other programs identified as a service need of the children and families using the children's center.

k. The provider shall establish an Advisory Committee for the children's center to advise on programmatic and fiscal operations and to explore and recommend opportunities to maximize linkages with available community resources. The Committee shall be comprised of at least one parent from the community, a local lawyer or law guardian, and representatives from the County Department of Social Services, the local Department of Health, the court or courts which will be served by the children's center and local day care providers. The Committee shall meet quarterly.

l. The provider shall establish appropriate written confidentiality procedures.

2. Safety

a. The provider shall establish written procedures to ensure that a child is released to the proper caregiver who must be the person who brought the child to the children's center unless the caregiver designates another person in writing or there is a written court order directing otherwise.

b. Staff shall accompany children to and from toilets located outside the children's center.

c. The provider shall take suitable precautions to eliminate conditions that create a safety hazard.

d. The provider shall develop an emergency evacuation plan. The emergency evacuation plan must be given to all caregivers and explained upon their entering the children's center. The plan must also be posted conspicuously in the children's center.

e. The children's center shall have a minimum of one single-line telephone for general use and emergencies.

f. The provider shall establish written security procedures for the children's center with court security personnel.

3. Health

a. The provider shall establish written procedures both for obtaining emergency medical care and for promptly notifying caregivers of a medical emergency involving their child.

b. Providers are not required to accept a child who is ill into the children's center. However, a child who is accepted into the children's center who has or develops symptoms of illness shall be provided with a separate place to rest until the child departs from the children's center.

c. The children's center must have and maintain a fully-stocked first-aid kit which shall include at a minimum the following: first aid information; assorted bandages and band-aids; gauze squares; roll of 2-inch sterile gauze; adhesive tape; child's rectal thermometer; ice pack; antiseptic solution; dosage spoon/measuring spoons; syrup of ipecac; sealable plastic bags; scissors; soap; tweezers; cotton balls and swabs; and disposable gloves.

d. Providers shall establish written diapering procedures, including the use of plastic gloves, for diapering children.

4. Nutrition

a. Snacks shall be provided for children who remain in the children's center for more than three consecutive hours.

b. The provider shall establish written procedures to ensure that all snacks are prepared and stored in a safe and clean manner and that all eating plates, cups and utensils are disposable and safe for children.

c. Providers shall obtain from caregiver's written feeding instructions for infant feedings. All bottles must be labeled with the child's first and last name.

5. Fire Protection

a. The provider shall take suitable precautions to eliminate conditions which may create a fire hazard and must also provide smoke detectors and fire extinguishers.

6. Cleanliness

a. The provider shall establish written procedures to ensure that all rooms, equipment, supplies, toys and furnishings, including cribs and sleeping mats, are kept clean at all times. The provider shall keep the premises free from dampness, odors, vermin and the accumulation of trash.

b. All trash must be disposed of in covered containers inaccessible to children.

c. Staff must thoroughly cleanse their hands at the beginning of each day, when they are dirty, after toileting, before and after food handling, after contact with any bodily secretion or fluid and following the changing of any child's diaper.

d. Providers shall be responsible for children's hygiene and toileting needs and shall ensure that children wash their hands when they are dirty, after toileting, before and after food handling, after contact with any bodily secretion or fluid and, for diapered children, after change of diaper.

e. Providers shall keep infants clean and comfortable at all times. Diapers shall be disposed of in a prompt and clean manner and shall be inaccessible to children.

f. The provider shall establish written procedures requiring that universal blood precautions be observed in the children's center.

D. Staffing Requirements

1. The provider shall establish written personnel policies to ensure that all staff, which shall include both paid employees and volunteers, when hired and during association with the children's centers, are responsible, in good physical and mental health, of good character and possess suitable personal qualifications for the care of children. Hiring procedures shall include requiring that:

a. the applicant authorize the provider to have access to any records regarding the applicant contained in the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment in accordance with any applicable provisions of law;

b. the applicant provide the names, addresses and day-time phone numbers of at least three references, other than relatives, who can attest to the applicant's character, habits and personal qualifications; and

c. the applicant provide a sworn statement indicating whether he or she has ever been convicted of a misdemeanor or felony in New York State or any other jurisdiction.

The results of these inquiries must be considered in determining whether to hire an applicant or use an applicant as a volunteer. If the provider has not received a response from the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment to the provider's request for information regarding the applicant, the applicant may be hired or used as a volunteer on an interim basis pending the receipt of a response from the Statewide Central Register. However, no person may be a staff member or volunteer who has been convicted of a misdemeanor or felony against children.

2. A minimum of two staff persons shall be on-site at all times when the children's center is open.

3. Competent, sufficient and direct supervision of children in the children's center must be provided at all times.

4. Supervision of children shall be provided by persons 18 years of age or older at all times.

5. At least one full-time staff person must have a minimum of two years of training and/or experience in early childhood development.

6. Children's center staff must be supervised on a regular and ongoing basis by the provider organization. This shall include at a minimum, monthly on-site visits and weekly telephone contacts.

7. The provider shall establish and provide to UCS for approval a comprehensive staffing plan which shall include provisions regarding staffing, volunteers and supervision.

8. The provider shall prohibit smoking and the consumption of alcohol or controlled substances in the children's center.

9. The provider shall establish personnel policies to ensure that staff and volunteers are adequately trained and supervised. Staff training shall include:

- a. Principles of early childhood development;
- b. The children's centers policies and procedures;
- c. Child abuse and maltreatment identification and prevention;
- d. First aid and CPR; and
- e. The judicial process.

10. The provider shall prohibit the use of corporal punishment and shall implement personnel policies which prevent the abuse or maltreatment of children.

11. The provider shall establish written procedures to ensure that any suspected incidents of child abuse or maltreatment are reported to the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment.

12. The provider shall establish a mechanism by which judges and court personnel can have ongoing communication with the provider regarding the children's center's operations.

13. The provider shall establish a written policy for substitute care in the event of staff illness or emergency.

APPENDIX B

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER OF THE
CHIEF JUDGE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Pursuant to the authority vested in me, and upon consultation with the Administrative Board of the Courts, and with the approval of the Court of Appeals of the State of New York, I hereby amend, effective immediately, section 34.0 of the Rules of the Chief Judge, to add a new guideline relating to children's centers, and amend the Appendix to section 34.1 of the Rules of the Chief Judge, to add children's centers to the frequency cleaning schedule, to read as follows:

§34.0 Court Facilities

* * *

GUIDELINE VIII. COURTROOM ANCILLARY FACILITIES.

* * *

VIII.8 Children's Center (Minimum 35 square feet of primary activity space per child exclusive of administrative and ancillary spaces such as staff offices, storage space, bathrooms and hallways, with a minimum total square footage of 150 square feet): A separate, enclosed and safe environment should be provided for children who are in court in connection with matters involving them or their caregivers. The center should be of sufficient size to accommodate a variety of furniture, equipment, toys, books and materials appropriate to the age of the children served, and also should include appropriate storage for such

equipment, toys, books and materials, as well as secure storage for children's personal belongings. The center should include toilet facilities and changing tables for children whenever practicable, or such facilities should be otherwise accessible in a nearby restroom.

* * *

[VIII.8] VIII.9 Table 2.

MINIMUM AREA REQUIREMENTS COURTROOM ANCILLARY FACILITIES

Facility	Net Sq. Ft. Minimum Per Unit
Robing Room	200
Six-Person Jury Deliberation Room	200
Twelve-Person Jury Deliberation Room	325
Attorney/Client Conference Room, Witness Waiting Room and Alternate Juror Waiting Room	100
Prisoner Holding Facilities Adjacent to Courtrooms	20/Per Person 50/Per Cell
Secure Attorney/Prisoner Interview Room	50
Public Waiting Adjacent to Courtroom	12/Per Person
Examination Before Trial Room	200
<u>Children's Center</u>	<u>35 of primary activity space/per child</u>

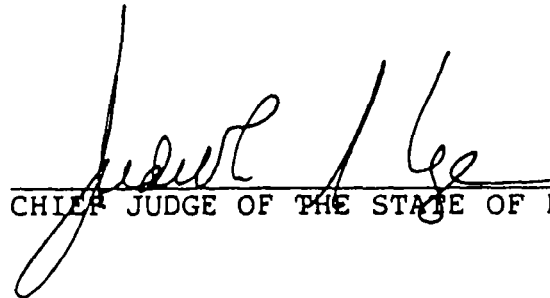
§34.1 Maintenance and Operation Standards for Court Facilities

* * *

Appendix for Rule 34.1 - Section I - Frequency Cleaning
Schedules

* * *

[see attached]



CHIEF JUDGE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

ATTEST Donald M. Sheran
Clerk of the Court of Appeals

Dated: June 30, 1994

AO/ 01 /94

17. MISCELLANEOUS FACILITIES

Employee Lounge/Lunch Room
Sick Room
Training Rooms & Media
Holding Cells
Children's Center

FREQUENCY SCHEDULE

	D/2	D	W	M/2	M	Q	S/A	A	A/R
Unlock and Lock Areas		X							
Check & Close Windows		X							
Check & Replace Missing Signage		X							
Check & Replace Burned Out Lights		X							
Police Area (B)		X							
Remove Cobwebs					X				
Empty & Clean Waste Containers		X							
Empty & Clean Ash Receivers		X							
* Dust High Ceiling & Walls							X		
* Dust Light Fixtures							X		
* Dust Walls, Decorations & Cabinets						X			
* Dust/Clean & Arrange Furniture						X			
* Dust Window Sills, Doors & Frames			X						
* Dust & Adjust Window Blinds/Shades			X						
* Dust Radiators & Covers			X						
* Dust Mop/Sweep Floors		X							
Spray Buff Floors (1)			X						
Strip & Refinish Floors							X		
Spot Clean Walls & Partitions					X				
Spot Clean Glass, Doors & Frames			X						
Clean Mirror		X							
Clean/Polish & Arrange Furniture							X		
Clean Sink & Shine Chrome		X							
Clean Door Saddles			X						
Clean Exhaust Vents					X				
Repair/Replace Flooring									X
Resupply Paper & Soap Products		X							
Wash/Clean & Adjust Blinds/Shades								X	
Wash Walls & Partitions								X	
Wash Glass, Doors & Frames							X		
Wash Windows, Exterior/Interior							X		
Disassemble, Clean & Reassemble Light Fixtures								X	
Report Any Damage or Hazards (A)		X							
**Painting									X
***Graffiti									X

Turn Off Lights When Appropriate

(A) Clean and Rectify Problem

(B) Free of Discarded Materials and Trash

(1) Includes: Sweep, Damp Mop, Spray Buff and Dry Mop

* Dust—Utilize Treated Cloths/Mops

** Painting—Touch Up As Required; Cycle Painting Within FIVE YEARS

*** Graffiti—To Be Removed Without Delay

APPENDIX C

Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children

Children's Center in the Courts

County	Court	Center	Provider
Albany	Family	Albany County Family Court 602 Broadway Albany NY 12207 518/427-3590	Albany County Opportunity Inc. 35 Clinton Avenue Albany NY 12210 518/463-3175 Amanda Bryans
Bronx	Family	Bronx County Family Court New York NY 10007 Bronx NY 10454 718/681-6618	Victim Services Agency Room 7-90/7th Floor 212/577-7700 Lucy Friedman
Erie	Family	Erie County Hall 25 Delaware Avenue Ground Floor Buffalo NY 14202 716/858-8800	YWCA of Western New York 190 Franklin Avenue Buffalo NY 14202 716/852-6120 Diane Rowe
Kings	Criminal	Kings County Criminal Court 120 Schermerhorn Street New York NY 10007 718/834-7433	Victim Services Agency 2 Lafayette Street Brooklyn NY 11201 212/577-7700 Lucy Friedman
Kings	Family	Kings County Family Court 283 Adams Street Room 110 Brooklyn NY 11201 718/643-2357	Victim Services Agency 2 Lafayette Street New York NY 10007 212/577-7700 Lucy Friedman
Monroe	Family	Monroe County Hall of Justice 99 Exchange Street Third Floor, Family Court Rochester NY 14614 716/428-2295	Catholic Family Center Tower Sibley Building 25 Franklin Street Rochester NY 14606 716/546-7220 Rita Augustine
New York	Civil Criminal Housing	New York County Civil Criminal & Housing Court 111 Centre Street New York NY 10013 212/577-8769	Victim Services Agency 2 Lafayette Street New York NY 10007 212/577-7700 Lucy Friedman
New York	Family	New York County Family Court 60 Lafayette Street New York NY 212/374-3690	Victim Services Agency 2 Lafayette Street New York NY 10007 212/577-7700 Lucy Friedman

Onondaga	City County Family Supreme Surrogate	Onondaga County Courthouse 401 Montgomery Street Room 110 Syracuse NY 13202 315/435-2223	Salvation Army 749 South Warren Street Syracuse NY 13202 315/475-1688 Roberta Schofield
Orange	Family	Orange County Family Court Orange County Government Center 265 Main Street Room 513 Goshen NY 10924 914/294-1127	YWCA of Orange County 565 Union Avenue New Windsor NY 12553 Marylee Pangman
Queens	Family	Queens County Family Court 89-14 Parsons Boulevard Room B-25 Jamaica NY 11432 718/520-3880	Victim Services Agency 2 Lafayette Street New York NY 10007 212/577-7700 Lucy Friedman
Rensselaer	Family	Rensselaer County Annex Third Street Lower Level Troy NY 12180 518/270-2126	Commission on Economic Opportunity 2331 Fifth Avenue Troy NY 12180 518/272-6012 Karen Gordon
Richmond	Family	Richmond County Family Court 51 Stuyvesant Place Room 323 Staten Island NY 10301 718/442-4613	Victim Services Agency 2 Lafayette Street New York NY 10007 212/577-7700 Lucy Friedman
Westchester	Family	Yonkers Family Court 53 South Broadway Yonkers NY 10701 914/423-5048	Westchester Children's Association 470 Mamaroneck Avenue White Plains NY 10605 914/946-7676 Cora Greenberg

APPENDIX D

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

1. On an average day, how many young children are brought to the court or courts to be served? This should be determined by actual court observation. _____

a. Describe the process you used to make this determination.

2. Indicate the age breakdown of the children observed on an average day.

_____ <1, _____ 1-2, _____ 3-5, _____ >6

3. Does the average number of children vary by day? ____ Yes ____ No

3a. *If yes:* On which day(s) are most children brought?

3b. *If yes:* What accounts for the higher number?

4. Does the number vary by the time of day? ____ Yes ____ No

4a. *If yes:* When are most children brought? _____

5. On average, how long do children wait in court? _____

6. Where do they wait now? _____

7. Does your county have any special issues/problems that make the need for a children's center particularly acute? ____ Yes ____ No

7a. *If yes:* Describe _____

APPENDIX E

In Family Court, Caring for Children

Special to The New York Times

WHITE PLAINS, Jan. 28 — Among the armed court officers, crowded waiting rooms and accusing glances in Family Court here, there is no place for a child.

One morning, for example, a 5-year-old from Peekskill played tic-tac-toe while teen-agers in shackles shuffled past the court waiting room. As strangers wrangled loudly over child support and paternity, he flipped through a magazine about Power Rangers.

But when he heard his own mother testify about a beating by his father, he began to shout and tear his magazine to pieces.

"I want my Daddy," he said to himself.

In Yonkers, a child's experience in court is starkly different. At the Yonkers Family Court, children can paint, listen to a story, play at baking a pizza or just take a nap while family battles rage in courtrooms that are safely out of earshot.

"It's a whole lot easier this way," said Albert Allen, who left his son Blair, 4, at the center while he fought a child-support order. "He would have just stayed upstairs with me and sat around. Here, he's busy and they gave him a snack."

The Yonkers court is one of nine in New York State that have drop-in child care centers where parents can leave their children to be supervised and entertained while they handle their own legal affairs. The Yonkers center opened last year, along with five others in courts from Buffalo to Staten Island, on a grant from the Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children.

The commission is about to award grants for a half-dozen more court child care centers throughout the state. Officials at the Westchester County Courthouse in White Plains hope theirs is among them.

In the 15 years that Judge Adrienne Hofmann Scancarelli has presided over Family Court in White Plains, she has seen more and more children tag along as mothers charge domestic violence, fathers fight paternity suits or parents argue over support agreements. Children slow down the legal system, she said, as court officers are called

Diverting youngsters as their parents attend to legal affairs.

upon to dispense lollipops, wipe up juice spills and provide kindly diversions.

"It's very distracting," said Judge Scancarelli, supervisor for Family Court in the Ninth Judicial District. "Children cry. They run around. Parents concentrate on the children instead of the case and everything takes longer. They go back and forth between Mommy and Daddy like it's a tug-of-war. Not to mention the mess they make. I've seen children bite court officers. I've seen children watch as parents hyperventilate or go into cardiac arrest."

The problem exists throughout the nation, with states from California to Massachusetts recognizing the need for courts to temper justice with day care. In many states, like New Jersey, specially designated children's waiting rooms are being set up in some county courthouses, furnished with donated toys and staffed with volunteer baby sitters.

But New York State is one of the first to finance a state-wide solution, said Lucy Hudson, a senior associate at the Center for the Study of Social Policy, in Washington. This year, the State Legislature allocated \$250,000 to for new court child care centers, which are operated by nonprofit groups that provide 40 percent matching funds. But 23 communities, including White Plains, are competing for the 6 grants.

"Everywhere we went, the problem was right in front of our eyes: people with so many stresses and lack of connections in their lives that they have to bring their children to court with them," said Sheryl Dicker, executive director of the Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children. "With an increase in poverty, homelessness, AIDS and crack, more and more problems are coming to the doorstep of the

courts."

In Ms. Dicker's vision, the centers will do more than amuse children: they will reach out to families who may not be aware that social services, like preschool and health programs, are available to them. They will also be a source of job training for day care workers, she said. In Yonkers, the center is staffed by a full-time director, two part-time workers from Westchester County's work-fare program and a number of volunteers.

"Most of the children we get here are happy to be here," said Jacqueline Pezzullo, director of the Children's Center. "The problem is getting them to leave. We keep a little basket of secondhand toys and books, so I have something to give them when they go."

Not everyone is thrilled with the idea of the court system taking on a nurturing role.

"Sometimes there is tension from people who work in the courthouse because they have to pay for day care and here are people, who are sometimes criminals, getting it for free," said Ms. Hudson, who is studying the issue on a grant from the United States Justice Department.

And there are some members of the judiciary who think that we ought to dispense justice from on high and not get involved with the human-services industry. But I think more forward looking jurists recognize that the problem exists and we have to do something about it."



New York Post: David Rentas

LEGAL EAGLE: Chief Judge Judith Kaye entertains Elijah Benton and Joshel Garcia yesterday in the new courthouse child-care center she helped create.

Center turns day in court into child's play

By SANDY GONZALEZ

Two days ago, Nicole spent all day squirming on the hard benches along the dingy halls of Manhattan Housing Court.

"We had to wait a long time so I laid down on the benches," the 6-year-old said. "I was so bored that I started complaining to my grandmother."

Yesterday, Nicole was back at the courthouse. Only this time, she was sipping imaginary tea in a play kitchen and she had no complaints.

Nicole was one of a dozen youngsters enjoying the new Children's Center for the Manhattan Civil, Housing and Criminal courts.

The drop-in child-care center in the 111 Centre St. courthouse opened to the delight of kids who would ordinarily spend excruciatingly long, boring and uncomfortable hours

waiting for their parents' cases to be heard.

The Children's Center, designed for children up to 12, comes complete with building blocks and fingerpaints, with orange juice and crackers thrown in for good measure.

The center is the creation of the Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children and spearheaded by Chief Judge Judith Kaye.

"The presence of large numbers of children in our courthouses threatens the safety and well-being of children," Kaye said. "Placing children in the safe, supportive environment of the Children's Center is a humane and effective solution to this problem."

Lucy Ann Friedman, executive director of Victims' Services, will be handling the center's day-to-day operations.

"The judges were seeing more kids in their courtrooms and felt that a courtroom setting was not only disruptive but only serves to further victimize the innocent," she said.

"This opens new horizons for both parents and their children."

The center's staff, who are certified in child care and early development, will serve up to 14 children at a time. The center is open during co hours, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The center is funded by a grant through the Department of Social Services.



CHIEF JUDGE JUDITH S. KAYE of the Court of Appeals, right, visits a new children's facility at Family Court in Albany Thursday with Alison Greene, regional director of Federal Health and Human Services.

ALBANY TIMES UNION
SEPTEMBER 1, 1995

Center puts children first at Albany Family Court

■ Youngsters gain a special place during an often difficult time

By CHRIS STURGIS
Staff writer

ALBANY — A demonstration program meant to improve the lives and ease the journey of parents and children who travel through Family Court received a stamp of approval from two high-ranking officials Thursday.

Court of Appeals Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye and Alison Greene, regional director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, praised the Children's Center at Albany Family Court.

Its staffers supervise children while their parents are in court, and has a Head Start "family worker" who provides a gateway to other social services programs.

"I refer to the children's centers as a bright spot in the New York State Court System," said Kaye.

Greene said she saw the need for such a facility while she worked at the Legal Aid Society in Westchester County waiting with clients while their children played on a dirty linoleum floor.

"There was absolutely nothing for the children to do other than play on the floor, or cry on the floor and wait to be heard. . . . This is a paradise for children," she said at the center surrounded by brightly colored blocks and stuffed toys.

The Albany Children's Center is one of nine facilities that are part of a demonstration project being monitored as a possible model for a statewide program.

Albany's center is one of only three that has the link to Head Start, the federal program that fights poverty with early remedies for developmental lags in pre-school children.

The state pays the YWCA of Albany \$49,000 per year to hire staff, rent the space and do some fund raising, said Jackie McGinnis, executive director of the Albany YWCA.

Program Director Xiomara Contreras said children stay at the center for as little as five minutes and for as long as six hours. She said her fluency in English and Spanish comes in handy.

A Head Start family worker is on hand to inform the parents about enrolling the child in Head Start and other social programs providing nutrition, emergency food and shelter and child care.

Kaye said such assistance can address family problems at the source and "keep them from coming back to court time after time."

Amanda Bryans, director of Albany County Head Start, said the court centers are a good place for Head Start to make contacts with potential clients whose children might never have a chance to receive Head Start services.

She said the Family Court Centers enable Head Start workers to offer their services to families who would otherwise go without them because of transient or chaotic living arrangements.

Yet, these children are often the neediest, she said.

Through Head Start, the children receive 5½ hours of care five days a week, two meals per day and referrals to other services such as dental care, emergency shelter and nutrition.

Jayne Dygert is the family worker for the Albany Children's Center.

"I don't want to do things for them, but I give them information and empower them so they can make their own decisions," she said.

Head Start Offered At Children's Center

CHIEF JUDGE Judith S. Kaye toured the Albany Family Court Children's Center yesterday with Allison Green, the regional director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to observe a national Head Start demonstration project.

Jointly developed and funded by the Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children and HHS, the project places a Head Start family worker at the Children's Center to help families enroll in the Head Start program. The family worker, whose sole caseload is children served by the Children's Center, also will assist families with other services, such as health care, WIC (Women, Infants and Children, a supplemental food and nutritional counseling program), emergency food and shelter and child care.

The Albany Children's Center is one of nine established in courts across the state that provide for children whose caregivers must attend to court business. Five additional centers are due to open later this year. If the demonstration project is successful, it will be expanded to other centers across the state.

Judge Kaye, who is co-chairwoman of the commission, commented, "Children who are served by the Children's Centers are among the poorest and most vulnerable. We want therefore to optimize the opportunity to reach these needy children by helping to link them to vital services like Head Start. I am gratified that HHS is working with the commission to jointly accomplish this task."

Staten Island Advance

Wednesday, July 27, 1994



ADVANCE PHOTO IRVING SILVERSTEIN

From left, Lucy Friedman, Judge Holt Meyer and Bethanne Denker visit the new Victim Services Children's Center in the Department of Health building in St. George.

Victim Services opens new center for children

A safe haven for kids who have to accompany adults to court

By LOTUS HAMM
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

Children were the winners yesterday at Staten Island Family Court in St. George, where Victim Services opened its new Children's Center.

The Children's Center, which is located on the third floor of the city Department of Health building at 51 Stuyvesant Pl., is now a safe haven for kids who have to go to court.

Many people who have to go to Family Court on the Island are forced to bring children with them. In the past, children had to bide their time in hallways or courtrooms.

Now at the Victim Services Children's Center, kids can learn the alphabet and play with a wide array of toys and games while their parents are in court.

The center also is equipped with two cribs.

"It will benefit the children by giving them a connection to other services," said Lucy Friedman,

executive director of Victim Services.

The center also will give parents peace of mind while they are in court, Ms. Friedman said.

Teachers at the center will have the chance to reach out to children and their families and provide them with referrals for any support they may need, Ms. Friedman said.

State Sen. Robert DiCarlo, who was present at the opening, lauded the goals of the new center saying, "It's not often you get a chance to see where the tax dollars go."

Ms. Friedman also cited the fund-raising efforts of the Kiwanis Club of Narrows Bay as being essential to the center's opening.

The club raised about \$8,000 for the center, according to member Maureen Turvey.

Victim Services also operates Children's Centers in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Manhattan, serving 12,000 children a year.



Photo by Susan Garra for The New York Times

A 5-year-old plays with Josephine Kellman, the director of the new child-care center at Family Court in Yonkers.

NEW YORK TIMES
JUNE 19, 1994

Finally Get Day In Family Court

By KATE STONE LOMBARDI

WHEN 4-year-old Ritchie arrived at the new child-care center in Yonkers Family Court recently, his arms were pinned around his mother's neck in a desperate embrace, and he was wailing at full throttle.

"I want to give Daddy a kiss!" cried Ritchie, whose last name is being withheld to protect his family's privacy. "I want to give you a hug, Mommy!"

Mommy and Daddy, in Ritchie's case, were embroiled in a bitter legal dispute involving the child himself, and it was being heard in the courtroom one floor above. The judge presiding over the case had asked that Ritchie leave the courtroom, both to spare the child the trauma of witnessing the proceedings and to prevent him from disrupting them.

Until last April, there would have been no appropriate place for Ritchie to go. Children removed from the courtroom were sent to hallways or waiting rooms, where court officers or lawyers waiting to try other cases were sometimes asked to watch them. Frequently, small children roamed the courthouse unattended. With no supervision, no toys and nothing for them to do, the children often disturbed both litigants and court staff.

In cases where children remained in the courtroom, they often witnessed vitriolic exchanges between

their parents. Children who lived through emotionally painful and often violent situations at home had to relive the experience in court. Some children witnessed their fathers being led in and out of the room in handcuffs. Often parents testified with children on their laps.

"Our biggest problem was trying to find someone to take care of the child," said Judge Howard Spitzer, Family Court judge. "Most of the cases here have to do with the children — abuse or neglect, paternity, custody and especially horrendous cases of sexual abuse. As a judge, the most important thing about having a place for the children to go is that it relieves both the trauma to the litigant and to the child."

A new program
that relieves
trauma of litigants
and their offspring.

When Ritchie arrived at the center howling, Josephine Kellman, the director, quickly went to work. She first showed him the water fountain in the hall. "It's

pretty much magic how it works," she explained. After that she showed him a toy phone and then a truck with a siren. Within a few minutes she had him intrigued, and the little boy's sobs dissipated into a few desultory sniffs. Soon the child, who sported a blond tail down the back of his neck, a gold earring and a baseball shirt, was engrossed in painting a picture.

The child-care center in Yonkers Family Court is one of five in the state. (The others are in Albany, Erie and Monroe County Family Courts and at the Manhattan Civil, Criminal and Housing Courts. A sixth center is opening in July on Staten Island.) The

program is the brainchild of the Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children, based at the Pace University Law School in White Plains and headed by Chief Judge Judith Kaye and Ellen Schall, a lawyer and professor at New York University.

The commission, which studies the problems of very young children affected by the state court system, found that child care in courthouses was a statewide problem and determined that there was an enormous need to develop a system to provide a safe and secure place for children to play while their parents were in court.

'Sheer Numbers' Unprecedented

"The sheer numbers of people bringing their children into court are unprecedented," said Sheryl Dicker, director of the commission. "And the people who are here are the people less likely to have support systems and other people to watch their children. People do not by and large bring their children to court because they want their child sitting in their lap while they testify. They do so because they have no one to watch their child."

Not only do the child-care centers protect children from hearing testimony that may be emotionally upsetting to them but they also allow parents to concentrate on the proceedings, freeing them from the interruptions and distractions of their children. Judges, in turn, are less torn between the need to protect litigants' children and the litigants themselves.

"Judges had no option because these cases needed to be adjudicated," Ms. Dicker said. "We can't deny a mother an order of protection because a child is present and needs to be protected from hearing about it."

The program is also trying to link children and their families to services they need. When a parent picks up a

child from the center, he or she can get information about the Women and Infant Children Program, Head Start, the food stamp program and local child-care centers.

In Yonkers, the child-care center is run by the Westchester Children's Association, a nonprofit independent agency based in White Plains, which studies the needs of children in the county. The agency said it wants to expand to White Plains and New Rochelle Family Courts.

Although it is only one flight of stairs away, the small but cheerful child-care room seems a million miles away from the accusations and acrimony being played out in the courtroom. One wall is covered with a pastel mural of a garden. The atmosphere is calm and gentle.

'It's Good for Everybody'

There is a section for infants, with a crib and rocking chair, an area for toddlers complete with a toy kitchen and blocks and games and toys for older children. Brightly colored children's paintings decorate the wall.

The center, open from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. whenever court is in session, can accommodate six children from infancy to 8. Although the director at each center is a professional social worker, the rest of the staff are volunteers. The entire system was started up with a \$300,000 grant from the State Legislature.

"It's good for everybody," Judge Spitz said. "We no longer have children running around the courtroom, which is very helpful to me. The child is not exposed to the courtroom, which can be very frightening, and parents are relieved of the responsibility of taking care of a child while going through a legal proceeding. It's an idea that was a long time coming, but it is finally here." ■

APPENDIX F

BUDGET SUMMARY BY OBJECT OF EXPENSE

OBJECT OF EXPENSE	LOCAL SHARE*	UCS FUNDS	TOTAL COST
A. Personnel Costs	24,120	36,180	60,300
B. Non-Personal Services	1,920	2,880	4,800
1. Supplies			
2. Equipment	240	360	600
3. Occupancy	3,788	5,682	9,470
4. Miscellaneous	200	300	500
5. Administrative	400	600	1,000
Total NPS	6,548	9,822	16,370
Total Operating Budget	30,668	46,002	76,670
C. Capital Budget	- 0 -	- 0 -	- 0 -
Total Funding Request	30,668	46,002	76,670

*Include amounts for all funds other than UCS Funds, including in-kind contributions to be used in support of the proposed project. Indicate amount of in-kind portion of Local Share in parenthesis next to Local Share Total

ATTACHMENT A - - PERSONNEL SERVICES WORKSHEET

POSITION TITLE	SALARY* BUDGETED (ANNUAL)	% TIME ON PROJECT	LOCAL SHARE	UCS FUNDS	TOTAL COST
Center Director	20,000	100	- 0 -	20,000	20,000
Head Teacher	16,000	100	6,400	9,600	16,000
Substitute Teacher	\$6/hr.	100	1,210	3,015	4,225
Project Director/ Supervisor	30,000	14	1,680	2,520	4,200
Bookkeeper	16,000	5	800	- 0 -	800
Personnel Total			18,090	27,135	45,225
Fringe Benefits Total 25% Rate			6,030	9,045	15,075
Total Personnel Services Costs			24,120	36,180	60,300

ATTACHMENT B.1 -- SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS WORKSHEET

ITEM	LOCAL SHARE	UCS FUNDS	TOTAL COST
General Office Supplies	620	- 0 -	620
Educational and Program Materials	1,000	2,880	3,880
Other	300	- 0 -	300
Total Supplies and Material Costs	1,920	2,880	4,800

*Note: Supplies are considered expendable items or materials which will be consumed or depleted over a period of time. Items of a more durable nature will last a reasonable period of time should be included under equipment.

ATTACHMENT B.2 -- EQUIPMENT WORKSHEET

ITEM	LOCAL SHARE	UCS FUNDS	TOTAL COST
Easel	- 0 -	240	240
Cassette/record player	- 0 -	120	120
Portable cribs (2)	240	- 0 -	240
Total Equipment Costs	240	360	600

ATTACHMENT B.3 -- OCCUPANCY COSTS WORKSHEET

ITEM	LOCAL SHARE	UCS FUNDS	TOTAL COST
Real Estate Rentals	3,700	- 0 -	3,700
Utilities	88	- 0 -	88
General Liability Insurance	- 0 -	5,682	5,682
Other	- 0 -	- 0 -	- 0 -
Total Occupancy Costs	3,788	5,682	9,470

ATTACHMENT B.4 -- MISCELLANEOUS COSTS WORKSHEET

ITEM	LOCAL SHARE	UCS FUNDS	TOTAL COST
Volunteer Training Volunteer Travel	- 0 - 200	300 - 0 -	300 200
Total Miscellaneous Costs	200	300	500

ATTACHMENT B.5 -- ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS WORKSHEET

ITEM	LOCAL SHARE	UCS FUNDS	TOTAL COST
Printing	- 0 -	200	200
Copying	100	- 0 -	100
Postage and Shipping	- 0 -	250	250
Telephone and Fax	200	150	350
Professional Insurance	100	- 0 -	100
Other	- 0 -	- 0 -	- 0 -
Total Administrative Costs	400	600	1,000

ATTACHMENT C -- CAPITAL BUDGET WORKSHEET

ITEM	LOCAL SHARE	UCS FUNDS	TOTAL COST
Total Capital Costs			

* Provide professional estimates to substantiate all costs.

ATTACHMENT D -- ANTICIPATED REVENUE

ITEM	SOURCE	AMOUNT
Cash Donations	Fundraising	640
In-Kind Donations	Provider (1,620) Volunteers (200)	1,820
Staff Positions	Provider	12,420
Local Government Spending	Occupancy	3,788
Grants	Local Bar Association (Staff Salaries)	12,000
Total Anticipated Revenue		30,668

APPENDIX G

CHILDREN'S CENTER INFORMATION

Name		Signature		PA/Entitlement & S.S.#	
Address				Zipcode	
Telephone		Other person authorized to pick up child			
Emergency contact: Name		Relationship		Telephone	
Relationship to child:		Date		Time In:	
☐ Mother ☐ Father ☐ Grandparent ☐ Other Relative ☐ Foster Parent ☐ Other _____		Court/Location		AM PM County	
Child's Name		Age Sex		Allergies/Illnesses	
				Special Needs	

We are trying to improve services to young children in court and their families. You can help us by voluntarily answering a few questions. Your answers are confidential and will not be shown to or discussed with anyone.

Why was the child(ren) brought to court? ☐ No child care ☐ Needed for case ☐ Wanted to bring the child ☐ Other _____		Usual child care arrangements: ☐ Home with parent/caregiver ☐ Private babysitter ☐ Head Start ☐ School ☐ Cared for by another relative ☐ Group day care ☐ Other _____	
Check any entitlements the child(ren) receives: ☐ AFDC ☐ Medicaid ☐ WIC ☐ SSI ☐ Other _____		Petition type of caregiver's case: ☐ Foster care ☐ Order of Protection ☐ Support ☐ Custody ☐ Adoption ☐ Other _____ ☐ Family Ct. ☐ Criminal Ct. ☐ Civil Ct. ☐ Housing. Ct.	
Signature		Time Out:	
		AM PM	
Signature of Other Person Authorized to Pick Up Child(ren) Reason:			
Services provided:			
☐ Materials given _____ ☐ Referrals _____			
Follow-up planned: <i>If yes, describe:</i>			
☐ No _____ ☐ Yes _____			

