



## Explore rewarding court volunteer opportunities!

For information about the programs available in each county and how to apply, please visit:

[www.njcourts.gov/volunteer](http://www.njcourts.gov/volunteer)

### **FAMILY COURT SERVICES**

#### **Child Placement Review Board** *(offered statewide)*

The Child Placement Review (CPR) program is a key component of the court's role in the oversight of children in foster care. Groups of trained judicial volunteers, appointed by the assignment judge, assist the court in reviewing cases of children placed outside of their homes by the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP). A volunteer is assigned to a CPR Board, consisting of about 5 volunteers, to review these cases.

CPR Boards conduct various reviews of children involved in "voluntary placement" cases. In such cases, DCPP has placed a child out of his or her home pursuant to a voluntary agreement signed by the parent but there is no allegation of abuse or neglect and DCPP has not filed a child abuse or neglect complaint case against the parent. In "litigated" cases, for which DCPP has filed a child abuse or neglect complaint, a CPR Board conducts one review to determine the progress made by DCPP in addressing the child's needs and any potential barriers to finding a safe, permanent home for the child. These litigated cases remain under the direct oversight of a judge.

In all cases, CPR Boards draft case-specific recommendations for the consideration of a judge. At CPR Board meetings, held at designated court facilities on a scheduled basis, the Board may interact with DCPP caseworkers or their supervisors, parents, foster parents, or other child welfare stakeholders. CPR volunteers complete court-sponsored initial training upon appointment as well as annual continuing education programs dealing with current child welfare issues, ensuring their meaningful participation in the child placement review process. A representative from each CPR Board statewide is selected annually to be a member of the New Jersey Child Placement Advisory Council (CPAC). For more information about CPAC, please visit: [www.njcpac.org](http://www.njcpac.org).

#### **Court Appointed Special Advocates** *(offered statewide)*

The Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program is designed to help monitor abused and neglected children in out-of-home placements. CASA fulfills this mission by the careful recruitment, training and supervision of community volunteers who are then assigned to a child in the foster care system. The primary objective of CASA is to represent to the court the best interests of the abused and neglected child to whom s(he) has been assigned. The court gives CASA investigative authority to examine all aspects of a child's case and to explore all viable avenues to achieve a stable home environment for that child. CASA becomes the child's voice in court. Program volunteers are required to complete mandatory program-specific training prior to appointment and in-service training thereafter. NOTE: If you are interested in finding out more about this program, please go to: [www.casaofnj.org](http://www.casaofnj.org) to obtain the appropriate contact information from the CASA of NJ website.

#### **Domestic Violence Court Assistance**

A domestic violence victim has the right to file a criminal complaint, a domestic violence complaint, or both types of complaints based on her/his own needs and understanding of the options. The victim will be referred to the Superior Court, Family Division to sign a domestic violence complaint (whereas a criminal complaint will be processed separately for investigation and prosecution through the Criminal/Municipal Courts).

Within the Domestic Violence Unit of the Family Division a victim is typically assisted and accompanied by a victim advocate who is affiliated with an independent non-profit agency (not the court). Trained court volunteers, under the supervision of court staff, provide general assistance to the Domestic Violence Unit helping to support an efficient complaint filing process as well as a positive courthouse experience for the victim.

#### **Juvenile Auto Theft Prevention** *(Essex County only)*

The Juvenile Auto Theft Prevention Program (JATPP) serves first time juvenile offenders whose principal charge is an auto theft related offense and who have never been adjudicated delinquent for any previous auto theft charge. The purpose of the program is to prevent future auto thefts and other delinquent behaviors. Community interest groups and trained volunteers educate juvenile offenders about the serious consequences of this crime, an integral part of the program's success.

#### **Juvenile Conference Committee** *(offered statewide)*

The Juvenile Conference Committees (JCCs) serve under the authority of the Family Division of Superior Court. A JCC is a six to nine member citizen volunteer panel appointed by the Family Division Judge. In a confidential setting, JCC panels hear and decide matters involving alleged juvenile offenders. The juvenile, parent(s) and or guardian(s) and complainant are invited to discuss the offense and related matters with the Committee. The JCC considers the facts, and makes recommendations to the judge for a resolution that would aid in the juvenile's rehabilitation.

The JCC program is designed to divert juveniles charged with first or second time minor offenses to their local JCC, which acts as a community-based arm of the Family Court. Charges that may be heard by the JCC include, but are not limited to: shoplifting, simple assault, attempted theft or theft, criminal mischief, criminal trespass, receiving stolen property and disorderly persons offenses. JCC volunteers are required to complete mandatory program-specific training.

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### **Supervised Visitation Program**

The Supervised Visitation Program was established by legislation to provide a forum for children and non-custodial parents to develop or re-establish ongoing familial relationships in a safe environment. The program affords the non-custodial parent the opportunity to spend time with his/her child in a neutral setting without interference from the custodial parent or other interested parties. The program provides children the opportunity to establish a normal, healthy relationship with the non-custodial parent. Specially-trained volunteers and student interns oversee the visits to observe interaction between the child/children and parent/guardian and to maintain a safe environment.

### **CIVIL PRACTICE SERVICES**

#### **Guardianship Monitoring Program**

Guardianship Monitoring Program (GMP) volunteers are appointed and trained to assist the courts with examining documents contained in guardianship files and entering information about the guardianships into the Guardianship Monitoring System (GMS). Volunteers also help obtain current information about incapacitated persons and their guardians and update GMS records. Data that volunteers enter into GMS is used to build the statewide GMS database and to verify that guardians comply with reporting requirements.

In addition, volunteers examine inventories and annual reports filed by guardians. These documents provide the court with information about the affairs of incapacitated persons to ensure that they are being handled properly and in their best interest. Volunteers use GMS to record their findings, including errors or discrepancies in guardians' reports, and to make recommendations about follow-up action that court staff or Probate Part judges should take.

GMP volunteers must have basic computer skills and should have some experience and/or interest in examining legal and/or financial documents. This volunteer work is completed in the County Surrogate's office on weekdays, generally between 8:30 am and 4:30 pm. GMP volunteers are expected to contribute about 6 to 12 hours per month to the program.

### **COMPLEMENTARY DISPUTE RESOLUTION (CDR) PROGRAMS**

#### **Municipal Court Services**

##### **Municipal Court Mediation (*offered statewide*)**

It is through the Municipal Courts that most citizens in the State interact with the judicial system, either as a complainant, a defendant, a victim, or a witness. The Municipal Court Mediation (MCM) program provides court users in nearly all municipalities with an alternative to having certain cases heard and decided by a judge (traditional litigation). Endorsed by the New Jersey Supreme Court, Municipal Courts refer cases involving "minor disputes" to be handled through the mediation process. Mediation is a structured, non-adversarial process that allows a neutral third party to assist disputing parties in reaching a mutually acceptable solution. The mediation process can be a less expensive, informal, and a more meaningful alternative to the traditional trial process, largely because of the efforts of trained volunteers and the resolution being decided by the participants.

Community members are recruited, screened, and trained as court volunteers to mediate cases of minor dispute. Basic mediation and conciliation training (an 18-hour course) is required of all volunteers prior to appointment. As a neutral party, a mediator helps litigants discuss the issues of their case and explore options to resolve the dispute themselves. The typical types of cases handled through mediation include, but are not limited to: simple assaults that do not include personal injury, trespass, harassment, creating a disturbance, animal or pet complaints, annoying phone calls, property disputes, non-payment of bills, bad checks, and criminal mischief. On average, volunteer mediators devote between two and six hours per month.

#### **Civil Division Services – Special Civil Part**

##### **Special Civil Part Settlement Programs**

Mediation is a dispute resolution process in which an impartial third party, the mediator, facilitates negotiations among the parties to help them reach a mutually acceptable settlement. In every county, settlement programs, using mediation and other forms of pretrial settlement techniques are available for contested Special Civil Part cases. In such programs, volunteers trained in accordance with Court Rule 1:40-12 work with litigants to resolve their dispute by developing a voluntary agreement that is acceptable to all and without having to go before a judge.

- **Landlord/Tenant Settlement:** Typical landlord and tenant complaints may involve failure to pay rent or habitual late payments, continued disorderly conduct, willful destruction or damage to property, and or violation of rules and regulations.
- **Special Civil Settlement:** One party may sue another party to collect an amount of money up to \$15000 that they believe is owed to them.
- **Small Claims Settlement:** One party may sue another party to collect up to \$3000 (or \$5000 for Return of Security Deposit).

#### **Family Court Services**

##### **Parenting Mediation**

Separation and divorce can dramatically affect the relationship between parents and their children. The quantity and quality of time that children spend with each parent is important to a healthy post-separation and post-divorce adjustment. Although the courts can determine a parenting plan, it is almost always best if the parents work together to agree on the details of the plan (i.e., schedule of the time children are to be in the care of each parent, parent's participation in education, health care, religious upbringing, decision making and financial support). Trained volunteers use mediation techniques to assist parents or guardians in developing the parenting plan, particularly in any family action in which the parties do not agree to a custody or parenting time/visitation arrangement.

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### **PROBATION DIVISION SERVICES**

#### **Juvenile Intensive Supervision - Not Actively Recruiting**

The Juvenile Intensive Supervision Program (JISP) provides to juveniles adjudicated delinquent a program of community supervision and serves as a dispositional option in the Family Court's continuum of responses. Juveniles who qualify present an individualized case plan that gives full assurance that their supervision in the community will result in positive social adjustments and not jeopardize the public's safety.

Juveniles admitted into the program are required to have a Community Mentor and a Core Community Team. The Core Community Team consists of seven to ten volunteers, preferably neighborhood citizens, who meet at least two times per month for review of the juvenile's program compliance. The Community Mentor works closely with JISP staff, the juvenile, the family and the Core Community Team in the rehabilitative effort. The mentor should be of such character to serve as a role model for the program participant. Volunteers are required to receive program-specific training.

#### **Volunteers in Education- Not Actively Recruiting**

The Volunteers In Education (VIE) program engages community members in assisting both youth and adult probationers. Some volunteers serve as tutors in basic math, science, and reading skills for probationers pursuing their G.E.D. Other volunteers serve as mentors in guiding probationers through the rehabilitation and probationary monitoring processes. Also, some volunteers may be affiliated with the local school system (i.e., an in-school professional staff member) and able to assist the court in monitoring the behavior and adjustment of the probationer/student in the school environment. Volunteers meet with the probationers at a public location, either one-on-one or in groups, to coach them to achieve a successful outcome. The VIE program is a collaborative effort between the Family Court, Probation Services, and Criminal (Drug Court) Divisions.

#### **Volunteers in Probation- Not Actively Recruiting**

Several models of Volunteers in Probation (VIP) currently operate within the court system, including the traditional VIP Program, in which an adult probationer is matched one-on-one with a specially trained volunteer who agrees to spend at least an hour and a half weekly with the probationer providing support and guidance. A Volunteer in Probation usually accepts the case for the duration of the juvenile's probation term, or an average of one year. The goals of this program include: to help prevent future offenses; to provide probationers in the justice system with the positive influence of a caring, stable adult (supplementing the work of paid professional staff); and to actively engage the community in the work of the courts. All prospective volunteers must submit to careful screening, initial certification training, continuing in-service training and ongoing supervision.

### **COURTHOUSE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

#### **Courthouse Services Assistance**

The Courthouse Service Assistance program is a platform to engage members of the community in the day-to-day administration of the court. Under the direction of a judge or other court staff, volunteers assist court personnel in performing a variety of tasks which facilitate case processing as well as customer service. Tasks may include, but are not limited to: directing and escorting litigants or jurors, data entry, filing, sorting and distributing mail, making photocopies, grammatic assistance, answering and making phone calls, and presenting paperwork to judges or court users.

#### **Courthouse Visitors Assistance**

The Courthouse Visitors Assistance program allows members of the community to participate in greeting and directing court users (i.e., litigants, attorneys, visitors, etc.) to their proper destination. Under the direction of court staff, volunteers are equipped to answer questions and provide assistance both in person or by phone, serving as a central welcome/information center for the court complex or a specific division. Volunteers may also maintain and distribute informational brochures or relevant forms regarding court services as well as assist with tasks such as, but not limited to: data entry, filing, sorting and distributing mail, and making photocopies.

### **OTHER COURT AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES**

#### **Vicinage Advisory Committee on Minority Concerns**

Vicines across the state have brought diverse groups of citizen volunteers together with judges, court staff, and other members of the public to examine issues of importance to minorities and other citizens in gaining fair and equitable access to court services and programs, assist with implementing the recommendations of the Supreme Court Committee on Minority Concerns, monitor the progress in each vicinage and to make recommendations for improvements to the Assignment Judge. NOTE: The recruitment and selection of volunteers for a local Advisory Committee on Minority Concerns occurs periodically and is based on the particular needs of the local court and its community. You may use the Volunteer Services contact information posted for your desired county to find out more about this program.