



Judicial Family Support Program in Puerto Rico

Recent Events Report

February 2007

Overview Judicial Family Support Program in Puerto Rico

2006 was a challenging year for the Judicial Family Support Program development in Puerto Rico. In accordance with the meaning of justice as an instrument that aims to attain healthy communication through orientation and service, the Judicial Family Support Program in Puerto Rico certainly tried during the last year to reach precisely those aims.

A logo was designed in order to identify all activities concerning the Program. The logo has in some ways given the judges and their families a way to identify with the Program.

An Internet page: www.tribunales.org is now available for all the judiciary to use. The site gives judges and their families access to educational material and other related topics of interest.

Puerto Rico has enthusiastically welcomed the Judicial Family Support Program. During 2006 special efforts were taken in developing educational activities and bringing all interested in the Program together through different kinds of social activities.

Achievements:

- Orientation session for youngsters, sons and daughters of judges
- Christmas Concert
- Orientation session for new judges' families



ORIENTATION FOR YOUNGSTERS, JUDGES' SONS AND DAUGHTERS

DATE: August 26, 2006

LIASON: Mrs. Anabel Solá

Director, Judicial Family Support Program

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:



Youngsters between ages 13 and 20, received general information about their responsibilities as a judges' son or daughter. Topics such as were discussed during the activity: peer pressure, personal relations with peers and the management of special community and school situations. Also as part of the activity an orientation session about ethical and practical aspects affecting judges' relatives was presented.

The workshop was designed and implemented by Dr. Mirelsa Modestti, clinic psychologist and wife of Hon. Rafael Taboas Dávila, Administrative Judge of the Aibonito Judicial Region. In order to effectively address doubts a previous discussion meeting was coordinated between young children sons of judges and Isabel Picó Vidal, wife of Hon. Federico Hernández Denton, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico.

Objectives:

- Provide orientation about ethical and practical aspects to a judge relative.
- Educate about the Judicial Family Support Program.

- Address particular situations such as a new perspective in responsibilities as member of a judge family.
- Ways to manage group and peers pressure.
- Assess the importance of their parents responsibilities vis a vis their feelings (children) so they can feel proud of them and their job as judges.
- Explore any feeling that may provoke concern or anxiety about all aspects of security.
- Dealing with public opinion: press, television or any other mass media.
- Getting acquainted with each other and establishing personal relations with the children of other judges.

PROGRAM:

I- Introduction:

Judge Hon. Sonia Ivette Vélez Colón, Administrative Director of the Courts, welcomed the participants and explained the Judicial Family Program rich and diverse possibilities. Judge Vélez also explained the Programs' operative structure.

II- Participants

Pairs were randomly formed. Each member of a pair interviewed the other one briefly and then he or she introduced the partner he or she interviewed to the rest of the participants.



– Dr. Modestti

A brief interactive session related to the purposes of the workshop was ably handled by Dr. Modestti.

IV- Getting acquainted

The assistants shared stories about how their parents became judges and how their lives were changed because of it.

V- The best and the worse... (“Musical seats”)

The participants played a game named “musical seats”.

In this activity participants walked around a line of seats. The number of seats was smaller than the number of participants. Each time the music stopped the one left standing shared with those sitting the best and/or worse experience he or she has had as a judge son or daughter.

VI- Group work: Facts

Participants were grouped by age in three groups. Each group discussed a situation related to ethics and its’ management and then proposed different solutions and ways of dealing with it.

VII- Plenary Session

Each group presented the results of its discussion to the plenary session. This interactive session allowed a comprehensive experience concerning perspectives on what should be done in certain situations, and helped in clarifying responses from the rest of the groups.

VIII- Topics

This workshop was designed with the children of court judges in mind. To let them meet with each other and share information about their experiences as judges sons or daughters. Topics discussed in the workshop:



“My father/mother is a judge, now what?”, “Peers and group pressure”, “The media and how to deal with it” and “Personal security issues”. Each topic was introduced and discussed by a facilitator. The facilitators were judges, judges’ sons and daughters and other adult judges’ relatives. In order to discuss the topics a facilitator narrated and developed an anecdote related to the topic and then explained how he or she handled the particular situation.

MY FATHER/MOTHER IS A JUDGE AND NOW...WHAT?

Mr. Federico R. Hernández Picó – Son of Hon. Federico Hernández Denton, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico

PEER AND GROUP PRESSURE

Mr. Manuel B. Torres Vélez – Son of Hon. Lissette Vélez Morales – Administrative Judge of the Utuado Judicial Region

Hon. María del Carmen Berríos – Drug Court Judge in the Ponce Judicial Region

Mr. Torres read an article published in the Internet about peer pressure, its risks and how adults may also be vulnerable to it.

Hon. María del Carmen Berríos offered a brief definition of the subject:

- *“Peer or group pressure: To exert control or influence in decision making”.*

Some of the risks juveniles are exposed to when not aware of peer pressure may be:

- *Alcoholism*
- *Values distortions*
- *Drug or any other addiction*
- *Disrespect to themselves and others*



Judge Berríos mentioned some anecdotes based in her experiences as a Drug Courts judge. She discussed with the activity participants the physical and emotional harm suffered by addicts and how addictions may provoke criminal conduct.

MEDIA

Ms. Yarelis Dumeng Santiago – Daughter of Hon. Miriam Santiago Guzmán, Administrative Judge of Aguadilla Judicial Region.

Mr. Daniel Rodríguez León – Press Director Office of Court Administration

Yarelis expressed some of her experiences as a judge daughter and recounted ways in which her life quality has suffered because some special characteristics of her father job.

Mr. Daniel Rodríguez explained how the Press Office deals in situations involving controversial or difficult judiciary decisions. The Press Office is the only entity authorized to express any concerns about a judge decision. It also can express sympathy toward any judiciary decision.

SECURITY

Ms. Natalia Sofía Calero Doitteau – Daughter of Hon. Yolanda Doitteau Ruiz, Judge of Family Relations in the Judicial Region of San Juan

Attorney Isabel Picó Vidal – Wife of Hon. Federico Hernández Denton, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Puerto Rico

Natalia, a judges' daughter shared with the assembly her feelings about fears concerning her personal security and wellbeing.

Mrs. Isabel Picó talked to the assistants about mechanisms inherent in the Organization that provides protection and security to judges and their families in risky or dangerous situations.

CONCLUDING PLENARY SESSION

Hon. Federico Hernández Denton, Chief Justice of Puerto Rico, closed the workshop commenting on the topics discussed in the workshop sessions. He



thanked the assembly participation, also the staff responsible for its organization and exhorted all young participants in showing continuing interest in their parents responsibilities as judges and asked them to offer their support in such a difficult and important task.

CHRISTMAS PARTY FOR THE KIDS



Christmas Season in Puerto Rico means the celebration of the Three Holy Kings Day. Three men dresses as the Holly Kings entertain the public, particularly children, giving them presents such as toys and candy. There was a part of the celebration a jumping house and a clown entertaining all assistants.

ORIENTATION ACTIVITY FOR RELATIVES OF NEW JUDGES

Date: November 29, 2006
Liason: Mrs. Anabel Solá
Director, Judicial Family Support Program

THE LIFE OF THE JUDGE AND ITS FAMILY

DESCRIPTION:

Activity for judges appointed in 2005 and 2006, their spouses and those family relatives who share the everyday worries and responsibilities of a judge .



RESOURCES

Attorney Isabel Picó Vidal, Wife of Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico, Hon. Federico Hernández Denton

Dr. Mirelsa Modestti González, Wife of Hon. Rafael Taboas Dávila, Administrative Judge of Aibonito Judicial Region

Attorney Ygri Rivera – Ex judge and consultor in Ethical Canons

Mr. Daniel Rodríguez León, Press Office Director, Office of Court Administration



GOALS

To share information and experiences and establish supportive relations between judges' relatives.

PROGRAM

WELCOME AND PRESENTATION OF THE JUDICIAL FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Attorney Isabel Picó Vidal

Attorney Isabel Picó offered a brief introduction of the Programs' goals and its' achievements for 2006.

CHANGES IN THE LIFE OF THE JUDGE AND ITS FAMILY

Dr. Mirelsa Modestti

Dr. Modestti discussed an essay authored by her: "El Ingreso a la judicatura: Retos para la familia de nuevos jueces". In this essay Dr. Modestti discusses the changes affecting the life of a person appointed judge for the first time. It also addresses the ways in which the judge relatives deals with the changes inherent in the new family panorama. The essay also discusses how these changes may entail sentiments of pride and satisfaction in the relatives simultaneously requiring of them some degree of sacrifice. Please see enclosed essay copy.

MEDIA: PRESS

Mr. Daniel Rodríguez León
Director, Press and Community Relations Office

Mr. Daniel Rodríguez spoke on how to assess cases of strong public interest. He also talked about the Press Office responsibilities. Please see enclosed brochure.



CODE OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT: SITUATIONS

Dr. Mirelsa Modestti
Isabel Picó Vidal, Esq.
Ygri Rivera, Esq.

In this part of the Program fictitious situations were proposed to assess ethical concerns involving judges' relatives. At the end of each situation a series of alternatives were presented to the audience. Mrs. Ygri Rivera, who participated actively in the special Committee for the Revision of the Judicial Ethical Code and who is also a consultant on these matters for the Judicial Academy of Puerto Rico, presided the discussion session and was very helpful in sharing her experiences and clarifying possible doubts. In order to complement the presentation a selection of Canons of Ethics that affects family life were introduced in the discussions as didactic material. Comprising the audience were judges, their spouses, their parents, their juvenile and adult siblings. The audience feedback was positive and quite substantial. Comments expressed gratitude and satisfaction for discussing topics of such importance and the opportunity of sharing them within the judges' families.

CONCLUDING SESSION

Hon. Federico Hernández Denton

Chief Justice
Supreme Court of Puerto Rico

Hon. Sonia Ivette Vélez Colón

Administrative Director
Office of Court Administration

Hon. Federico Hernández Denton and Hon. Sonia Ivette Vélez Colón, thanked the assistants participation and mentioned with particular zeal and appreciation the staff responsible for the activity. All assisting judges, their families and relatives enjoyed a pleasant and relaxed time talking and sharing ideas.

