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Press Release

**For Immediate Release
June 29, 2009**

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First Guide to DC's Juvenile Justice System Published

The Council for Court Excellence today published a *Guide to the DC Juvenile Justice System*, in English and Spanish. The guide is the first written roadmap for the general public about how the DC juvenile justice system operates, how a case moves from arrest to discharge, what roles various government and non-governmental agencies and individuals play, and what rights victims of juvenile crime have.

"Last year nearly 3,400 youth were prosecuted in the DC Superior Court's Juvenile Court," said Robert Spagnoletti, the former DC Attorney General who led the committee that produced the guide. "For these youth and their families, the system has been utterly bewildering. They have had to rely on information gained in a haphazard fashion and often by word-of-mouth. This has seriously compromised their ability to represent their interests at a very critical time. The information in this guide will be a great help to youth and their families, but it will be just as important to victims of juvenile crime, who also need to know how things work."

Marie Johns, the Council for Court Excellence's board chair, explained "When our board decided to focus on improving juvenile justice, we found very quickly that almost no one could explain to us how the system works. That convinced us that our first major juvenile project should be this guide – to bring some transparency to the system."

Spagnoletti added, "it's a confidential system as to the identities of the youth, but that makes it even more important for the community to understand how the system works."

The Council for Court Excellence released the guide today at a press conference featuring representatives of several of the DC agencies responsible for the juvenile justice system: Robert Hildum, director of the Public Safety Division of the DC Attorney General's Office; Michael Satin, supervising attorney in the juvenile section of the Public Defender Service for DC; Judge William Jackson, presiding judge of the DC Superior Court Family Court; and Vincent Schiraldi, director of the DC Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services.

The Council for Court Excellence, a 27-year-old nonprofit DC civic organization, has a long history of publishing other law-related educational guides – to the foster care system, the probate system, the jury system, and the adult criminal system. The *Guide to the DC Juvenile Justice System* was funded by grants from the State Justice Institute, the Moriah Fund, the Herb Block Foundation, the Philip L. Graham Fund, the Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation, the Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, the George Preston Marshall Foundation, the Mary and Daniel Loughran Foundation, the Dimick Foundation, and the Women's Bar Association Foundation; with in-kind support from the DC Bar's Pro Bono Program.

Copies of the English *Guide* and the Spanish *Guía* may be obtained from the Council for Court Excellence and will be available on its website, www.courtexcellence.org.

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