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For immediate release: September 13, 2007  
For further information contact: Winnie Comfort  
Tamara Kendig 609-292-9580

### **New Appellate Pilot Program Helps Indigent Litigants Obtain Free Legal Representation**

The Appellate Division of Superior Court is seeking attorneys to represent indigent litigants at no charge in certain types of appeals, Judge Edwin H. Stern, presiding judge for administration of the Appellate Division, has announced. Case types eligible under the pilot program include domestic violence, child custody and visitation, small claims and special civil part cases, including landlord/tenant cases.

"Although there is no right to representation in these types of cases, we want to provide indigent litigants who believe they have a meritorious appeal, and cannot otherwise obtain an attorney, with the opportunity to seek assistance from counsel who are willing to participate in the program," said Judge Stern. The program does not guarantee counsel but rather provides a mechanism to bring together eligible litigants and participating law firms.

One of the most expensive aspects of an appeal is the purchase of the transcript of the lower court proceeding. Under the pilot program, participating attorneys or law firms would agree to purchase the transcript in cases they select.

The Appellate Division is urging participation by any attorney or firm willing to make a difference to a party who might otherwise be unable to pursue an appeal or who would otherwise be required to proceed without representation in the appellate process. In turn, participating attorneys would gain valuable experience in the appellate process and in the practice area in which they represent clients they are helping. In addition, certain deadlines will be extended to accommodate attorneys who agree to represent program clients.

Appellate Judge Jose L. Fuentes has been working to coordinate the pilot program. "We have been encouraged by the positive responses we have heard in our discussions with various members of the bar and with law firms and we believe this is a positive step toward expanding access to the courts," he said.

Interested attorneys will find more information about the program at [njcourtonline.com](http://njcourtonline.com) in the Notice to the Bar dated [September 12](#). An orientation session will be scheduled to further explain the mechanics of the program and provide more specific information. Interested law firms should contact the Appellate Division Clerk John Chacko at 609-292-4693.

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