



BURLINGTON VICINAGE PRESS RELEASE

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Burlington Vicinage Ombudsman Program Goes Mobile

MOUNT HOLLY—Burlington Vicinage Assignment Judge Ronald E. Bookbinder today announced that the vicinage is improving access to the court through a mobile Ombudsman's Office. Heshim "Chip" Thomas, the court's ombudsman, will assist court users at off-site locations in Willingboro and Pemberton townships.

"We are sending Chip on the road to give better service and more access to court users who might not be able to travel to Mount Holly, said Judge Bookbinder. "This program gives the public convenient access to the court's wide array of services."

Thomas will provide information to the public and self-represented litigants on court forms, services and programs and will distribute brochures and other information about the courts. When appropriate, he will refer customers to relevant social service agencies or other local agencies for assistance. While the ombudsman cannot provide legal advice, he can help court users find local lawyer referral services.

The court selected Willingboro and Pemberton due to their higher population and limited public transportation. Information will be available on the Judiciary's Foreclosure Mediation Program, since Willingboro and Pemberton have the highest foreclosure rates in Burlington County.

The ombudsman program began in the Camden Vicinage in 1996 and expanded to Essex in 1998. In June 2005, the Judiciary adopted a statewide policy for providing an ombudsman in each vicinage.

"The ombudsman program offers a unique opportunity to help the public learn more about their court system," said Thomas. "I am excited about this community outreach effort and look forward to meeting with court users in Willingboro, Pemberton and the surrounding areas."

Community outreach hours are now available as follows:

Willingboro

Tuesdays from 10 a. m. to 1 p. m. at the Willingboro Senior Citizen Center, Kennedy Center, 429 J.F. Kennedy Way.

Pemberton

Wednesdays from 10 a. m. to 1 p. m. at the Pemberton Township Municipal Court, 500 Pemberton-Browns Mills Road.

Additional information is available through the Office of the Ombudsman at 609-518-2530.

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