



**COUNTY OF MIDDLESEX
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Successful partnership between County and State Superior Court leads to Better Facilities and Programs

DECEMBER 8, 2009 -- The Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the State Superior Court, Middlesex County Vicinage, unveiled the new fourth-floor expansion of the Family Courthouse and renovated children's waiting room, and announces the County's potential participation in a new state program to identify alternatives to detention for juvenile offenders.

Judicial and County officials gathered at the Middlesex County Family Courthouse in New Brunswick today to discuss the partnership that led to the improvements.

"The completion of the expansion to the 4th floor of the Middlesex County Family Courthouse to accommodate the growing needs of the Family Division has been a welcomed event," said Presiding Family Court Judge Deborah J. Venezia. "The completion marks the culmination of the collaborative efforts and strong working relationship between the County and the Judiciary to meet the needs of the community."

Freeholder Deputy Director Christopher D. Rafano, Chair of the County's Administration and Finance Committee and Liaison to the Superior Court said: "The expansion of the Family Court Building was a high priority for me as a Freeholder and as an attorney who walks these halls. The new courtrooms and renovated office space will ensure that our legal system runs as smoothly and efficiently as possible and that we can meet the growing needs of our residents."

Freeholder Blanquita B. Valenti, Chair of the County's Human Services and Aging Committee, spoke about the redecorated Children's Waiting Room: "It has been our goal to provide a less stressful, more relaxed environment for the children. The new décor helps us along, but what makes it really special is the wonderful staff from the Raritan Valley YMCA, who helps care for the children while their parents are in court."

The county contracts with the Raritan Valley YMCA to provide child care services.

Freeholder Mildred S. Scott, Chair of the County's Law and Public Safety Committee, said an application is being prepared for the County's potential involvement in the State's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) Program. The overall goal of this State sponsored program is to reduce the unnecessary and inappropriate use of detention while maintaining public safety.

"As a retired Sheriff's officer, I welcome opportunities where we can put our collective efforts together to improve our justice system for our residents, including the youngest among us," Freeholder Scott said. "I look forward to exploring the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative to see how it may complement our existing programs and how or if it could make positive changes in the lives of those who may have chosen the wrong path at a young age."

"JDAI presents a unique partnering opportunity between the Judiciary, County and Juvenile Justice Commission to improve the quality and effectiveness of the juvenile justice system," said Judge Deborah J. Venezia. "We look forward to the prospect of joining the other JDAI counties in what is considered to be one of the nation's most effective, influential, and widespread juvenile justice reform initiatives."