



STATE OF ILLINOIS
CIRCUIT COURT
22ND JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
McHENRY COUNTY, ILLINOIS



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Thursday, August 12, 2010

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**** Press Release****

On Friday, August 6, 2010, the Twenty Second Judicial Circuit of McHenry County, in collaboration with; the McHenry County State's Attorney's Office, McHenry County Public Defender's Office, McHenry County Court Services, CASA of McHenry County, the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts and the American Bar Association, held the first ever Youth Focus Group.

This Youth Focus Group was the local project as part of the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts Child Protection Data Courts Project that the Twenty Second Judicial Circuit of McHenry County is participating in. The Twenty Second Judicial Circuit sought this grant opportunity and applied to be a project site for the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts. McHenry County is one of five counties in Illinois that is collaborating with the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts and the National Center for State Courts in a three-year Child Protection Data Courts Project. The purpose of the Child Protection Data Courts Project is to establish a court-based mechanism to assess child protection court performance measures and enable local courts to improve efficiency and effectiveness in ensuring safety, permanency, due process, and timeliness in child protection cases, and improve outcomes for children and families.

The focus group was comprised of ten youth who are or have recently been involved in an abuse or neglect case before the Twenty Second Judicial Circuit. Two representatives of the American Bar Association, who organize the Youth Empowerment Project on a national level, facilitated the meeting. The youth were asked questions about how long they had been in foster care, court involvement, representation, strengths of the child welfare system, weaknesses of the child welfare system, barriers to participation, youth empowerment in case planning and court participation and opportunities for change.

The youth were very enthusiastic at having the opportunity to express their opinions and ideas about the child welfare system. Participants were very supportive of having additional focus groups in the future. The youth also had the opportunity to have lunch with Judge Maureen McIntyre, Assistant State's Attorney Julia Almeida, Assistant Public Defender Dana Stott, Court Services Chief Managing Officer of the Juvenile Division Phil Dailing and Court Administrator James Wallis. The court expects to receive an in depth report from the American Bar Association in early September.

The Twenty Second Judicial Circuit would like to thank the members of CASA of McHenry County, including Executive Director Kelly Pokharel, Kathy Deitz and Jason Sterwerf for their support throughout the project and providing support to the participants during the focus group.

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