



CSSD Chronicle



A regular publication of information and news about Court Support Services
Division

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Domestic Violence: Family Services Participates in Out Reach Program to the Latino Community

Wanda Huertas and Alex Rosario, two Family Relations Counselors from Court Support Services Division (CSSD) Hartford Family Services Unit participated in a Latino Public Mock Court addressing "Domestic Violence and the Judicial Process" presented by The Connecticut Coalition against Domestic Violence (CCADV). The Mock Court was a full day event held on June 6th. It was free to the public and presented entirely in Spanish. The audience was the general community of the Greater Hartford area as well as members from the professional community, including lawyers and human service providers.

EVENT FEATURED MANY STAKEHOLDERS: The CCADV is a statewide network of community based programs that provide shelter, support, and advocacy to battered women and their children and counseling and support services for non sheltered victims. For the Mock Trial, CCADV's Jacqueline Torres coordinated a collaborative event that brought together members of the Judicial Branch, including the Honorable Carmen L. Lopez who acted as "presiding judge", CSSD staff and other community agency representatives. The goal was to provide education and raise awareness around the judicial system's response to domestic violence and its processes that hold offenders accountable and assist victims, in order to decrease the fear of reporting domestic violence or seeking help. CSSD Executive Director William Carbone noted that the event "demonstrated that the CSSD can play an important role in educating the public through this type of outreach activity. It also highlights our efforts at addressing the different needs of the various populations that we deal with by providing this information in a culturally competent, language appropriate manner."

A "WONDERFUL LEARNING EXPERIENCE": According to Wanda Huertas, "The event was a wonderful learning experience. I had the opportunity to not only explain my role as a Family Relations Counselor to the Latino community but also to role play it in my native language."

She went on to say that "Alex and I were able to educate people about the services that Family Services offers and increase understanding of our role in the court process both in the Criminal Court when there is a domestic violence arrest and Family Civil Court when someone has applied for a restraining order." Other participants included Ramona Mercado-Espinoza, Esq. of Greater Hartford Legal Aid; Sgt. Rebeca Garcia of Bridgeport Police Dept.; Jennifer Lopez, Victim Advocate Supervisor of Hartford Interval House; Rafael Gonzalez, Victim Advocate of Hartford Interval House; Melissa DeJesus, Victim Advocate of Waterbury Domestic Violence Program; Nayda Serrano of Department of Emergency Services; and Priscilla Arroyo of New Britain Judicial District Court.

PORTRAYALS OF DV PROCESSES: The Mock Trial consisted of two different dramatizations of a domestic violence incident starting from the 911 call through the arraignment process. The morning presentation was an exaggerated dramatization of how the Police, Victim Advocate, Family Relations Counselor and the Court should not respond to domestic violence, but may be what members of the community fear would happen. The afternoon session featured the portrayal of the appropriate and realistic response the public would encounter from these agency representatives if such an incident were to occur in their lives. The event ended with a question and answer session between the audience and the drama participants. Community response to the event was extremely positive and has resulted in direct calls to the Hartford Family Services office from local residents seeking information and services. It is anticipated that the Hartford Family Services Office will continue to collaborate with CCADV and others in the future to create similar out reach activities.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION about this event please contact Wanda Huertas, FRC II at wanda.huertas@jud.ct.gov, 860-706-5185 and/or Alex Rosario, FRC I, alex.rosario@jud.ct.gov, 860-706-5194 at the Hartford Family Services Office.

Suggestions? Questions? Comments? Concerns? Contact us!

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