

NEWS RELEASE

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Supreme Court of Pennsylvania Changes Rules to Require Parental Notification

HARRISBURG, March 13, 2008 — Parents must be notified when their child is directed to appear for a court proceeding under a new order issued by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania.

The new standard for parents, guardians and legal custodians is part of a series of related changes the Supreme Court has ordered to delinquency rules governing Juvenile Court actions. Prior to the order, only the juvenile being summoned to court was required to be notified — not parents or guardians.

“There may be situations that can be avoided, rectified or improved upon by a parent or guardian knowing a son or daughter has been summoned to appear in court,” said Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ronald D. Castille. “These changes are consistent with the Supreme Court’s longstanding commitment to the strengthening and preservation of Pennsylvania’s families.”

The rule changes — which take effect June 1 — were developed by the Juvenile Court Procedural Rules Committee during a year-long process that included public input prior to being adopted by the Supreme Court.

Among the changes is a new procedural rule (Rule 140) that establishes requirements for bench warrants that did not previously exist — such as where the child is required to appear, out-of-county custody guidelines and prompt hearing regulations as well as mandatory parent or guardian notification.

The new changes also address the terminology used in identifying participants in court proceedings to help guide and clarify matters for the courts and law enforcement agencies when issuing arrest warrants. The term “minor” will be used to identify a witness, while “juvenile” will mean the subject of the court proceeding.

Driving the changes was a highly publicized case in which a 13-year-old boy in northeastern Pennsylvania was taken out of school by police to a juvenile detention center after he failed to show up to testify about an incident he witnessed. His parents were not notified about the subpoena, or when police took him out of class.

The Juvenile Court Procedural Rules Committee also has submitted a series of related recommendations governing dependency cases involving children. The committee is seeking public comment on the recommendations through Monday, March 17.

A complete copy of the new rules, along with the court order, is available on the Pennsylvania Judiciary Web site at: <http://www.courts.state.pa.us/Index/SupCtCmtes/juvct/indexjuvct.asp>