

NEWS RELEASE

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Advisory Group of Orphans' Court judges Created to Review Comprehensive Statewide Rules

HARRISBURG, October 17, 2007 — The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania today announced that it will tap the knowledge of an eight-member working group of experienced judges from across the Commonwealth to enhance procedures for adoptions, guardianships, wills and other Orphans' Court matters.

The Orphans' Court Procedural Rules Committee is undertaking a substantial review of current rules governing statewide practice and procedure in Orphans' Court. The newly created Ad Hoc Advisory Committee to the Orphans' Court Procedural Rules Committee will provide valuable input as the Orphans' Court Committee considers the feasibility and practical need for comprehensive statewide Orphans' Court rules.

The specially selected members of the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee include the following:

- Hon. Robert G. Bigham (Adams Co.)
- Hon. Gary P. Caruso (Westmoreland Co.)
- Hon. Calvin S. Drayer Jr. (Montgomery Co.)
- Hon. Todd A. Hoover (Dauphin Co.)
- Hon. Anne E. Lazarus (Philadelphia Co.)
- Hon. Frank J. Lucchino (Allegheny Co.)
- Hon. John C. Mott (Bradford Co.)
- Hon. Joseph D. O'Keefe (Philadelphia Co.)

“This is a large and complicated task, so it only makes sense to draw on the unique insight of those with a wide variety of experience and understanding of this intensely personal and multifaceted area of court practice,” Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ralph J. Cappy said. “The intent here is to simplify the current system and standardize governing procedures so everyone has a clearer idea of what is expected and better outcomes are realized for the citizens of Pennsylvania.”

The Orphans' Court divisions of the Courts of Common Pleas typically handle adoptions, guardianships of minors and incapacitated persons, oversight of estate and trust administration, contested wills and disputes over the appointment and removal of fiduciaries — or those accountable to the court for administering a trust or estate.

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The proposed rules review is intended to:

- Promote standardization of statewide practice and reduce variations caused by reliance on local practice.
- Provide better direction to practitioners and judges throughout the state, especially in counties without dedicated Orphans' Court divisions.
- Clarify certain procedures involving citation practice and pleadings.
- Harmonize Orphans' Court proceedings with general civil practice to the extent possible, given the unique subject matter within Orphans' Court jurisdiction.

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