



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

 [NOTE: Audio actualities from Chief Justice Castille are available](#)

News for Immediate Release

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Chief Justice Castille Issues Final Progress Report on Juvenile Justice Recommendations

HARRISBURG — Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ronald D. Castille today presented a final update on how the judiciary has addressed recommendations to bolster the state’s juvenile justice system after failures in Luzerne County led to the federal prosecution of two judges.

The chief justice’s eight-page report outlines a statewide revamping of many court rules and practices taken by the court over the past three years. It was presented at the Juvenile Justice Academy held in Hershey. The Judicial Education Department of the AOPC hosted the first Juvenile Justice Academy as part of its spring symposium to familiarize juvenile court judges with the latest law, rules and practice of adjudicating young offenders. The faculty includes leading juvenile justice practitioners and legal experts.

The changes outlined by the chief justice were based on a series of recommendations from the Interbranch Commission on Juvenile Justice, which was chaired by Supreme Court appointee Senior Judge John M. Cleland, of McKean County, and whose members proposed juvenile court improvements for all three branches of state government in its May 2010 final report.

“Typically reports like these lay on the shelf somewhere,” the chief justice said. “But the Supreme Court took positive action. We’ve reviewed all of the recommendations to the court system and this is our final report of what we have implemented.”

The court’s actions were in response to 14 recommendations the commission made that were specific to the judiciary. Other recommendations addressed changes by the executive and legislative branches of government.

The chief justice said there were 57 individual rule changes and amendments made to the rules governing procedures in both the appellate and juvenile courts. Some of the changes implemented by the Supreme Court, its various committees and the AOPC included:

- Prohibiting the use of restraints on a juvenile in the courtroom unless it’s for the safety of court personnel and the juvenile
- Requiring juveniles to have an attorney present during proceedings

- Establishing an extensive question-and-answer process before the judge before a juvenile can enter a plea agreement
- Creating an expedited appeal process whenever a juvenile is removed from his or her home as a sentence
- Strengthening the special ethical obligations of juvenile court prosecutors.

All of the rule changes and amendments were in addition to the Supreme Court's assignment of Senior Judge Arthur E. Grim, of Berks County, to review all of the convictions of Luzerne County juveniles over a period of several years. The action resulted in the expungement of the criminal records of all 2,401 juveniles who appeared before former Judge Mark Ciavarella.

"These changes in the rules that we have made in instituting new procedures in the juvenile court system will strengthen what was already recognized nationally as an excellent juvenile justice system," Chief Justice Castille noted. "The system has a lot of good individuals working in it day and night who want to make sure justice is achieved for these young offenders and their victims."

The final update was a follow up to an interim progress on the commission's recommendations released in March 2011. A copy of [the final report](#) is available on the Unified Judicial System website.

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