



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

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Chief Justice Davis, Dean to announce new law school class **For immediate release Tuesday, January 5, 2010**

MORGANTOWN, W.Va. – The Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia and the West Virginia University College of Law in Morgantown together will hold a press conference at 11 a.m. on January 11, 2010, in the Marlyn E. Lugar Courtroom at the College of Law in Morgantown.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Robin Jean Davis, Twenty-Eighth Judicial Circuit Chief Judge Gary L. Johnson, College of Law Dean Joyce E. McConnell, and Adjunct Professor Catherine Munster will talk about a new class the law school will offer this semester called "Child Protection and the Law."

The class is being underwritten by the Supreme Court's Court Improvement Program Board, using training grant funds from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families.

The law school has long had classes in family law and domestic violence law that covered aspects of child abuse and neglect law, and it has represented the interests of children in its clinical law program. This class, however, will be the first to focus solely on Chapter 49 of the West Virginia Code, which covers child abuse and neglect cases handled by circuit courts. It is a timely addition, in that the law school's clinical program is entering into a collaborative clinic with the Pediatrics Department of WVU to represent families and children, particularly in abuse and neglect proceedings.

"Abuse and neglect is probably thirty to forty percent of the caseload of circuit courts right now. We really need well-trained professionals in that area," said Judge Johnson, Chairman of the Court Improvement Program Board.

Ms. Munster, a Clarksburg attorney, is a member of the board, which creates and promotes initiatives that make the court system more responsive and efficient in achieving safety, permanency, well-being, due process, and timely resolutions for children and families in the child welfare system.

At the press conference, Chief Justice Davis will talk about the Court's support of the Court Improvement Program Board. Judge Johnson will talk about the Board's decision to underwrite the class. Ms. Munster will talk about the curriculum of the three-credit-hour elective class. Dean McConnell will talk about how the class fits in with the overall mission of the College of Law, which previously has collaborated with the Supreme Court to provide continuing education to professionals in the area of child abuse and neglect.

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