Video to Explain Court Process to Juveniles, Families


A juvenile delinquency courtroom can seem like a confusing blur to teenagers and their parents who don’t know what’s happening, can’t figure out who’s doing it and don’t fully understand the meaning of the legal terms being tossed around.

But teens in delinquency court will be called on to make choices in the process. And those choices will affect their future. That makes understanding even more critically important.

Recognizing the need to make the process more understandable, the Supreme Court directed its Steering Committee on Families and Children in the Court to come up with ways to help children and families who have to go before a judge.

The committee produced a video to explain what happens when a teenager or child is charged with breaking the law. The video is designed to reach the juveniles who have been charged as well as their parents. It will be shown at courthouses, detention centers and assessment centers throughout the state.

“What happens in a courtroom can be difficult. But it should not be confusing,” said Chief Justice Barbara J. Pariente. “Our job in the court system is to help all individuals who come into our courts understand and navigate the judicial process.

“With young people, the challenge is even greater. Unfortunately, in the juvenile delinquency system, we see both young children and teenagers entering our courtrooms around the state.
charged with a delinquent act. Many of them are scared, which is understandable. It is my hope that this video will give juveniles a clearer picture of what is happening when they enter the courtroom and better explain the judicial process to them."

The 12-minute video shows the perspective of a teen who is arrested and taken to court. He doesn’t understand what is happening or what is going to happen. But later in the detention center he gets some essential information from another teen, who explains the people and the process in real-life terms. Once he has a clearer understanding of the process, the arrested teenager realizes it’s in his interest to play an active role.

“One of the biggest problems I have seen in the courtroom is the fact that people often do not understand what is going on,” said Circuit Judge Scott Bernstein of Miami. “I believe this video goes a long way to help raise the understanding of families who appear in court.”

A panel of judges from the committee and staff from the Office of the State Courts Administrator wrote and reviewed the script, and Knowles Video Inc. produced the project.

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