

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Friday, February 27, 2015

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Judge Approves Settlement Sharply Reducing Court Oversight in District's Juvenile Detention Facilities

Many Reports No Longer Required to Court's Special Arbiter

WASHINGTON, D. C. – A D.C. Superior Court judge has preliminarily approved a settlement agreement that significantly reduces court oversight and monitoring in a three-decade-old class-action lawsuit on behalf of children confined in District of Columbia juvenile-detention facilities, Attorney General Karl A. Racine and Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) Acting Director Clinton Lacey announced today. The case is known as *Jerry M., et al. v. District of Columbia, et al.*

Under the agreement signed yesterday by Judge Herbert B. Dixon, Jr., several subjects in the “*Jerry M. Work Plan*,” approved by the court in 2007 as the exit plan for ending the litigation, will no longer be subject to Court oversight and monitoring by a Special Arbiter appointed by the Court. These include environmental health and safety, outdoor recreation, individualized education at the District's Youth Services Center, restraints, and disciplinary actions.

The agreement provides that six areas will be shifted to an arrangement in which DYRS must submit only one report this year to lawyers for plaintiffs in the case. Those areas include room confinement, intake assessment and housing assignment, planning and delivery of services and placements, the grievance process, and staff training.

Five areas in the work plan remain subject to court oversight and monitoring by the Special Arbiter: critical incidents and assaults, supervision and staffing, behavioral health services, fire safety, and health services.

Attorney General Racine said, “**We are very pleased that significant progress has been made in efforts to resolve this longstanding lawsuit against the District. We look forward to the day that this case and several other major lawsuits involving government services can be dismissed so that court supervision no longer is necessary over some of the District's important services.**”

The Attorney General commended Deputy Attorney General Ellen Efros; Grace Graham, former chief of the Public Interest Division's Equity Section; and Assistant Attorney General Chad Copeland for their work on the case.

Acting Director Lacey said, "The partial settlement of the *Jerry M.* class-action lawsuit represents tremendous progress in bringing this nearly 30-year-old lawsuit to an end. More importantly, it represents the tremendous progress that has been made in ensuring that our youth are subject to humane, rehabilitative, therapeutic conditions in DYRS facilities. I would like to personally acknowledge the efforts of DYRS, OAG, Special Arbiter Grace Lopes, the Mayor's Office, Plaintiffs' Counsel and Judge Dixon in helping to make this possible. You have my word that I am committed to continuing to ensure that DYRS provides our youth with the best care possible such that continuing court oversight is not necessary,"

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