



## **St. Louis County Circuit Court**

105 South Central Avenue  
Clayton, Missouri 63105

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **ST. LOUIS COUNTY FAMILY COURT IN FULL COMPLIANCE WITH 2016 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AGREEMENT**

**CLAYTON, MO – March 7, 2019** – The St. Louis County Family Court has fulfilled all the requirements of a 2016 agreement between the Court and the U.S. Department of Justice, according to a D.O.J. report released today.

Since the last D.O.J. report, issued in August of 2018, the Court has achieved full compliance with the 2016 agreement to ensure that juveniles' constitutional rights and best interests are protected. The requirements include full access to legal representation, enhanced staff training, and data tracking and analysis to improve services to youth and families. Meanwhile, the average number of juveniles held in the St. Louis County Juvenile Detention Center continues to decline.

“The professionals at all levels of the court system are committed to providing ... due process, to administer juvenile justice in a non-discriminatory manner and to do so in a way that provides balanced attention to the safety of the community, accountability for the juvenile perpetrator and concern for the victim,” wrote Retired Pennsylvania Judge Arthur E. Grim, one of two independent auditors monitoring the Court’s progress for the justice department. “There is a palpable commitment to excellence that I find in my interaction with persons throughout the organization which consisted of more than mere words.”

During his most recent visit to observe Family Court operations in December, Judge Grim met with Presiding Judge Gloria C. Reno, Family Court Administrative Judge Margaret Donnelly, staff members, juvenile officers, court-appointed lawyers, youth and their families and community partners working to provide alternative programs to keep juveniles from entering the courts. Judge Grim praised court staff for helping juveniles and families navigate the legal complexities of the juvenile justice system in “clear language.”

He also gave the Court high marks for its outreach efforts, including a community meeting held in University City in December for families of court-involved youth, law enforcement, faith-based and youth advocacy organizations, sponsored jointly with the St. Louis County Children’s Services Fund.

Reaching full compliance with the agreement paves the way to the end of federal oversight of the Family Court.

“The comprehensive improvements in our juvenile justice system are not the work of one person, but rather the result of dedicated efforts by our entire bench and court staff in St. Louis County,” said Family Court Administrator Ben Burkemper. “We will continue to provide due process and fairness for the children and families in the juvenile justice system, as well as promote initiatives to keep children in school and with their families and communities, where they can grow into good citizens and successful adults.”

A link to the full Feb. 28, 2019 Department of Justice report can be found here:

<http://wp.stlcourtscourts.com/wp-content/uploads/PDF/FC/4thAuditorComplianceReport82216Final.pdf>

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