

Chief Judge of the State of New York



Jonathan Lippman

November 18, 2011

TO: Family Court Judges
FROM: Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman *JL*
SUBJECT: Public Access to Family Court

I know I am speaking for all of us when I say how disturbed I was to read the article in the New York Times today concerning public access to Family Court. Fourteen years ago, we as an institution made it crystal clear that Family Court proceedings are presumptively open to the public. We can never achieve the recognition and the resources that Family Court so greatly needs, and deserves, without the public being able to see the critical work that the Court does each and every day. It is clear that our rule, if anything, is being honored in the breach.

I have directed Judge Pfau, and effective December 1, 2011, Judge Prudenti, to work closely with you, the Administrative and Supervising Judges, and court personnel at all levels to make sure that both the letter and the spirit of our long-standing rule is complied with now and in the future. The transparency and integrity of the court process is vital to ensuring public trust and confidence. Thank you for your hard work, which I greatly appreciate, and for your immediate attention to this matter.