

How can I learn more?



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Erie County Family Court

You can attend an information session at Erie Family Court:

Attorneys (Attorneys for Children, Social Services Attorneys, Assigned Counsel, Volunteer Lawyers, Kinship Attorneys)

Agencies (Social Services caseworkers and administration, Community Agencies, Contract Agencies, Interpreter Agencies, mediators, advocates)

How can I participate?

If you are a Court Officer, speak to your Lieutenant and offer to volunteer!

If you are an attorney, learn about the program and consult with your client to explore if this program can be beneficial for the child/youth on the case.

If you are an agency or court staff, learn more about the program and share this information when others have inquiries.

If you are a Jurist, learn about the program and offer it as an option on cases where a child/youth must testify.



COCAP

Court Officer Community Affairs Program

Erie County
Family Court



New York State
Unified Court System



What is COCAP?

The Court Officer Community Affairs Program (COCAP) is a voluntary program facilitated by the New York State Court Officers, offered to children who must come to court to testify. In cases where a child must attend court, a volunteer court officer can be assigned as a "buddy" for the child/youth before and after they meet with the judge on the day of their testimony.

Assigned Court Officers are all volunteers who have attended an overview of the program including protocols, and guidance on appropriate interactions with the child/youth.

Why is this happening?



The courthouse can be a stressful and scary place for children who must come to court to testify. In Erie County Family Court, the Court Officers have come together to create a safer, supportive experience for children that must attend court.

Is this voluntary?



YES!

COCAP is entirely voluntary and the child, the caregiver or the attorney for the child may decline or change their mind at any time.

What should I expect?

Court Officer Buddy Program
Support for Children and Youth Testifying in Court

- A **Court Officer Buddy** can be assigned to any child or youth who needs to testify in court.
- On the day of testimony, the court officer will:
 - Meet the child and their accompanying adult at **security on the first floor**
 - Help navigate the courthouse and assist with **check-in**
- A **private waiting room** can be arranged, away from the public waiting area, if preferred.
- While waiting, the court officer can provide **activities and games** to help the child feel more at ease.
- When it's time to testify:
 - The court officer will **escort the child to the judge's chambers**
 - Remain nearby until testimony is complete
- After testimony:
 - The court officer will **reunite the child with their caregiver or Attorney for Child**
 - Offer to **escort them safely out of the building** and to their transportation if needed

Our goal is to provide comfort, safety, and support to every child navigating the court experience