

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**THE VICTIM ADVOCACY AND SAFETY ENHANCEMENT PROJECT (“VASE”)  
OPENS IN NEW CASTLE COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT MENTAL HEALTH COURT**

The Victim Advocacy and Safety Enhancement Project (“VASE”) hosted a one-day Symposium on Trauma and the Justice System at the New Castle County Courthouse on November 1, 2013. The Symposium explored the intersection of domestic and sexual violence and justice-involved women.

VASE, made possible by a 24-month grant awarded to the Administrative Office of the Courts by the Office on Violence against Women (“OVW”), is the first cross-court initiative of its kind. VASE creates a “specialized track” within Superior Court Mental Health Court (presided over by the Honorable Jan R. Jurden) and the Court of Common Pleas Trauma Informed Probation Court (“TIP Court” presided over by the Honorable Mary M. McDonough) to identify justice-involved victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking and coordinate appropriate services and trauma-informed care. The project provides justice-involved victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking with the tools to end the cycle of violence and abuse, address the root cause of the problem that may have led to their involvement with the criminal justice system, and help reduce recidivism.

The Symposium began with a presentation titled “Using a Trauma Informed Approach in the Justice System” from Dr. Janine D’Anniballe, a counseling psychologist and national trainer from Boulder, Colorado. Dr. Susan Miller, a Professor of Sociology and Criminal Justice at the University of Delaware, then presented on the sociological context of women’s offending and trauma. Later in the afternoon, Lynn Hecht Schafran, Esq. and Claudia Bayliff, Esq. of the National Judicial Education Program explained the intersection of sexual assault and domestic violence and spoke to the audience about how the language we use to describe domestic violence and sexual assault shapes our response. At the end of the day, Judge Jurden moderated a discussion among VASE project partners to explore how the VASE project impacts participating litigants. The panel participants included Commissioner McDonough; Cathy Johnson, Esq., Office of the Public Defender; Krista Griffith, Esq., Attorney General’s Office; Valerie Marek, LCSW, CADC, Survivors of Abuse in Recovery, Inc.; and Kate Brookins, CCDP, VASE Project Coordinator.

The Symposium was attended by elected officials, judicial officers, court staff, and domestic and sexual violence treatment providers and advocates. Representatives James Johnson, Rebecca Walker, and Michael Barbieri showed their support of the VASE project by attending the Symposium. United States Senator Tom Carper, Senators Margaret Rose Henry and Bryan Townsend, and Representatives Valerie Longhurst, Helene Keeley, and Dennis Williams sent legislative aides on their behalf.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:**

**Robin Freeman, Esq.**  
**Planning & Research Coordinator**  
**Administrative Office of the Courts**  
**302.255.0168**  
[robin.freeman@state.de.us](mailto:robin.freeman@state.de.us)

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