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Students Launch New Pro-Bono Effort “The Juvenile Justice Project”
Touro Law Students Work with the Center for Restorative Practices to Help Break the School to Prison Pipeline for At-Risk Youth

Central Islip, NY – Touro Law students in the Public Interest Law Organization of Touro (PILOT) have taken on a new and innovative pro-bono project, the Juvenile Justice Project, to help at-risk youth in the community. Law students are working in conjunction with the Center for Restorative Practices, a non-profit organization that is housed in the William Randolph Hearst Public Advocacy Center at Touro Law, whose mission is to break the school-to-prison pipeline and reduce disproportionate minority representation in the juvenile justice system.

Touro Law students have received alternative dispute resolution training to facilitate these conferences, which are designed to preclude youth from entering the justice system for typically minor infractions. The overall goal of the program is to break the school-to-prison pipeline for youth who have engaged in minor criminal activities and find themselves under probation or conditional restraints, which make it more likely that they will be imprisoned for mild infractions. Touro Law students facilitate these conferences in both the school and home settings, whereby all persons involved in an incident may discuss what happened and arrive at an agreeable outcome, that keeps the at-risk youth out of the juvenile justice system.

“We are trying to prevent youth who have made one mistake from ending up in prison for a second, less serious infraction while on probation,” said Suzanne Valles, a third year student and treasurer of PILOT. She continued, “This work is eye-opening and I think we are doing a great job to help these kids. In addition to the mediation work we do, I think it’s helpful for these kids to see people fighting for them and believing that they can turn their lives around.”

Currently, about 15 Touro Law students have received training from the Center for Restorative Practices and are actively working as facilitators with youth in the local community.

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Touro College Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center’s 185,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility is located adjacent to both a state and a federal courthouse in Central Islip, New York. Touro Law’s proximity to the courthouses, coupled with programming developed to integrate the courtroom into the classroom, provide a one-of-a-kind learning model for law students, combining a rigorous curriculum taught by expert faculty with a practical courtroom experience. Touro Law, which has a student body of approximately 750 and an alumni base of more than 5,000, offers full- and part-time J.D. programs, several dual degree programs and graduate law programs for US and foreign law graduates. Touro Law Center is part of the Touro College system.

Touro is a system of Jewish-sponsored non-profit institutions of higher and professional education. Touro College was established in 1971 primarily to enrich the Jewish heritage, and to serve the larger American community. More than 18,000 students are currently enrolled in its various schools and divisions. Touro College has branch campuses, locations and instructional sites in the New York area, as well as branch campuses and programs in Berlin, Jerusalem, Moscow, Paris and Florida. Touro University California and its Nevada branch campus, as well as Touro College Los Angeles, are separately accredited institutions governed in common by the same Board of Trustees as Touro College.