

Beth McCann
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NEWS RELEASE –

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DENVER DA BETH MCCANN CREATES JUVENILE UNIT

Denver District Attorney Beth McCann announced today the creation of a separate prosecutions unit to emphasize juvenile justice within the district attorney's office.

Effective March 1, the Juvenile and Drug Courts Unit within the district attorney's office is being reorganized to establish a separate Juvenile Unit, led by its own chief deputy and specially selected deputies. The Drug Court Unit will continue within the office.

"Juvenile Court has in the past been considered a transition assignment between Denver county and district courts within the office," McCann said. "As a candidate, and now as Denver's District Attorney, one of my main priorities is to improve the juvenile justice system, promoting the expanded use of restorative justice and alternatives to jail for young people so one mistake doesn't ruin a kid's life," McCann continued. "Establishing this separate unit emphasizes this focus on juvenile justice."

McCann notes that the new Juvenile Unit will complement and further promote the Denver DA's juvenile diversion program, an intervention program that works with first time juvenile offenders to divert them from the criminal justice system. McCann is planning an expansion of the juvenile diversion programs, the inclusion of 18-26 year olds in the program, and the possibility of pre-booking diversion (before charges are filed).

The Juvenile Unit assignments for deputies will be longer assignments, three years, than in the past, for lawyers who specifically want to work in the juvenile system oriented toward rehabilitation and intervention in an effort to prevent future criminal behavior, and who are willing to become familiar with the many service providers in the area of juvenile justice. The chief deputy assignment will be for a minimum of five years.

McCann appointed Deputy District Attorney **Courtney Johnston** to be the new chief deputy of the Juvenile Unit. She brings many years of courtroom experience in the DA's office to the position, including several years in the Family Violence Unit, as well as several years of work with adolescents as a teacher in Teach for America in Mississippi, as a social services specialist in a large foster care system in Atlanta, GA, and as a treatment leader in a Denver system of residential treatment centers serving teenagers.

The Juvenile Unit will continue to prosecute cases in Denver Juvenile Court involving juveniles between the ages of 10 and 18. The Drug Court Unit screens, files and prosecutes cases that involve drug activity and handles a large volume of cases. That unit works closely with Denver Drug Court.