

MEDIA ADVISORY



11th Judicial Circuit of Florida

For Immediate Release

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MIAMI-DADE COURTS LAUNCH G.R.A.C.E. COURT TO ASSIST VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING



The Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida is proud to announce the launch of G.R.A.C.E. Court – Growth Renewed through Acceptance, Change and Empowerment – a specialized court devoted to the needs of children who have been identified as victims of commercial sexual exploitation and labor trafficking.

G.R.A.C.E. Court is part of the Juvenile Dependency Division of the Miami-Dade Courts and provides comprehensive services and support to these children and their families under protections afforded by the state's human trafficking laws.

Although the hidden nature of human trafficking makes it difficult to determine the exact number of victims, the Center for Court Innovation estimates that there are between 300,000 and 2 million victims of human trafficking in the United States. The National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) reports that Florida is third in the nation in highest call volumes to the Center.

“Unbeknownst to most, human trafficking does not only occur in third world countries, but also in our own backyards,” said Judge Maria Sampedro-Iglesia, who presides over G.R.A.C.E. Court. “When 12-year-old children are being held captive so their bodies can be sold, this community must respond. It is my hope that G.R.A.C.E. Court will be the answer for the boys and girls and their families who come to our court system from such desperate straits.”

According to the NHTRC, G.R.A.C.E. Court is the first specialized court in the nation devoted solely to human trafficking. The name “G.R.A.C.E. Court” was chosen to remove the stigma and shame associated with the term “human trafficking,” and to encourage these young people and their families to start seeing themselves in a position of strength and growth.

G.R.A.C.E. Court logo designed by: Andrea Junco and Tania Smith, School for Advanced Studies

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The mission of Florida’s judicial branch is to protect rights and liberties, uphold and interpret the law, and provide for the peaceful resolution of disputes.

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If you are a person with a disability who needs any accommodation in order to participate in this proceeding, you are entitled, at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance. Please contact the Eleventh Judicial Circuit Court’s ADA Coordinator, Lawson E. Thomas Courthouse Center, 175 NW 1st Ave., Suite 2702, Miami, FL 33128, Telephone (305) 349-7175; TDD (305) 349-7174, Fax (305) 349-7355 at least 7 days before your scheduled court appearance, or immediately upon receiving this notification if the time before the scheduled appearance is less than 7 days; if you are hearing or voice impaired, call 711.