



STEVEN M. FULOP  
MAYOR OF JERSEY CITY

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**\*\*\* PRESS RELEASE \*\*\***

### Jersey City Launches Safe Serenity Room to Help Domestic Violence Survivors during Court Proceedings with Offenders

JERSEY CITY - **Mayor Steven M. Fulop** joins **Municipal Prosecutor Jake Hudnut**, **Jersey City's Municipal Court**, **Department of Health and Human Services**, **Women Rising**, and **Sarah's Daughters** to address a critical area of concern with the launch of a Municipal Court Safe Serenity Room. As emerging data shows an increase in domestic violence cases since the COVID-19 outbreak, in recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness Month this October, Jersey City is opening the doors to a new initiative exclusively designed as a resource center and safe haven for domestic violence survivors involved in often stressful and complicated court proceedings.

A secure location for this project has been established at the Lewis S. McRae Justice Complex. The space is outfitted with a large screen monitor to see and hear court cases so that survivors and children do not have to be in the same courtroom as their offenders.

"This is a significant step that plays a much bigger role in our broader efforts to address all public safety issues," said **Mayor Fulop**. "The goal here is to provide added safety for domestic violence survivors, and we're taking it a step further by providing families with the services and resources extending beyond the courtroom to help them successfully move forward with their lives."

Currently, the Jersey City Municipal Court has one court dedicated to handling domestic violence cases, which handles over 100 domestic violence cases per week. The Municipal Court's ultimate goal of case management services will include employment support, social services benefits, and community resources.

"In Jersey City, we understand the role of a prosecutor is much more than bringing a case to court. We value the importance of making domestic violence survivors whole by mitigating the challenges associated with coming to court and giving them resources to thrive long after their case is closed," added **Municipal Prosecutor Jake Hudnut**.

The designated room is designed to provide a calming atmosphere with comfortable furniture as well as domestic violence resources for those seeking help. Additionally, the Safe Serenity Room includes a child-friendly area with books and toys for children's entertainment while concurrently removing children from a tension-filled courtroom where they are often directly exposed to the unfolding court proceedings, including allegations of abuse and child custody orders involving family members and loved ones.

The City of Jersey City is partnering with two powerful community nonprofit organizations, Women Rising and Sarah's Daughters, to also provide volunteer victim advocates who offer in-court referrals. Counselors will meet one-on-one with domestic violence survivors and provide the vital tools they need to move forward, such as sheltering, relocation assistance, counseling, and victim compensation.

Jersey City's Department of Health and Human Services and the Division of Violence Prevention will also offer Duluth-style counseling for defendants.

"The court strives to make resources available for survivors of domestic violence, particularly with challenges that have been exacerbated by the COVID 19 pandemic. Jersey City Municipal Court is committed to providing a safe and comfortable environment for all court users. The court hopes to extend further resources to residents by collaborating with service providers and agencies to offer additional resources," said **Wendy Razzoli, Municipal Court Director**.

"This partnership will enable the Jersey City Municipal Court to enhance the court user experience by increasing the participation of impacted individuals in the judiciary process. Moreover, it is another example of how the Jersey City Municipal Court continues to be at the forefront of municipal court innovation by utilizing programs and resources in addressing our large volume of diverse cases," said **Honorable Ramy A. Eid, Jersey City Municipal Court Chief Judge**.

Per NJ protocols, all municipal court remains virtual. However, the court is making the Safe Serenity Room available for domestic violence survivors before and after any court proceedings.

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