

# MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT



## *Office of Public Information*

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### **HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO HOLD COURT AT MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT June 29 mock hearing to focus on real-life case about five-year-old boy's calls to 911; he sought help for mother, operators treated calls as pranks**

LANSING, MI, June 21, 2012 – A real-life case about 911 operators and governmental immunity will be the focus of a mock Michigan Supreme Court session enacted by high school students at the Michigan Hall of Justice next week.

The 20 students will play the roles of Supreme Court justices and attorneys in studying the case of *Patterson v Nichols and Sutton*. Like actual Michigan Supreme Court hearings, the mock Supreme Court session will take place in the Supreme Court's courtroom on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of the Hall of Justice. The June 29 event, which starts at 11 a.m., is open to the public.

Learning Center Coordinator Rachael Drenovsky said she chose a real case to help students appreciate "how real-life problems and events present legal issues. We don't often appreciate just how important a role the law has in our lives."

In *Patterson v Nichols and Sutton*, a five-year-old boy called 911 twice, telling both operators that his mother had passed out. The first operator told the boy that she would send police, but did not, recording the call as a prank; the second operator scolded the boy for "playing on the phone," but did send a police officer. The boy's mother, who had suffered a heart attack, died; she might have survived had medical help been sent after the first call. The woman's daughter sued the 911 operators, alleging wrongful death and intentional infliction of emotional distress. The operators moved to dismiss these claims, invoking governmental immunity, but the trial court denied their motions and the Court of Appeals affirmed the trial court. The appellate court said that the case should go to trial, observing that the operators were grossly negligent and that a reasonable jury could find that the two operators engaged in "extreme and outrageous conduct." The Michigan Supreme Court, after hearing oral argument, declined to take the case on appeal and let the Court of Appeals ruling stand.

Instructors for the Learning Center program include Court of Appeals Judge Amy Ronayne Krause, Supreme Court and State Court Administrative Office staff, and other legal professionals. Sessions take place from 9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. in the Michigan Hall of Justice, located at 925 West Ottawa Street, Lansing. For more information, contact Rachael L. Drenovsky at 517-373-5027 or visit <http://www.courts.michigan.gov/plc/>.