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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
November 5, 2008**

**CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERT A. MULLIGAN ISSUES  
NEW CHILD SUPPORT GUIDELINES FOR EFFECT JANUARY 1, 2009**

Chief Justice for Administration & Management Robert A. Mulligan today announced the promulgation of revised Child Support Guidelines to be effective on January 1, 2009, based on a comprehensive review of the guidelines by the Child Support Guidelines Task Force he appointed in 2006. The 12-member Task Force was chaired by Probate and Family Court Chief Justice Paula M. Carey.

The report recommended significant, broad-based changes intended to make the guidelines more simple, clear, comprehensive and consistent with economic and societal changes of the last two decades. The report of the Task Force, available at [www.mass.gov/courts/childsupport](http://www.mass.gov/courts/childsupport), explains the rationale behind the guidelines to assist attorneys and litigants in understanding and using them.

The recommendations include provisions that place greater value and emphasis on the involvement of both parents in the lives of children; consider the increase in health insurance costs and the requirement of mandatory health insurance in Massachusetts; provide greater guidance relative to when a child support order should be modified; and set forth specific deviation factors for deviation from the guidelines. These guidelines will apply to the circumstances of many more families in the Commonwealth.

The Child Support Guidelines are used by the justices of the Trial Court in setting temporary, permanent or final orders for current child support, in deciding whether to approve agreements for child support, and in deciding cases that are before the court to modify existing orders. According to federal regulations, each state must review its Child Support Guidelines at least every four years to ensure their application results in the determination of appropriate child support amounts.

“The dedicated, expert members of this Task Force have worked diligently to develop guidelines that address the dual goals of predictability and simplicity,” said Chief Justice Mulligan. “All members brought their diverse perspectives to the thorough analysis and discussion of all aspects of child support. I joined their meetings regularly and greatly appreciate their faithful and extraordinary commitment to this project. I am very pleased to issue these thoughtful, practical guidelines, which I am confident will ensure the well-being of children across the state.”

“It has been an honor to serve as Chair to this incredible group of hardworking and dedicated individuals,” said Chief Justice Carey, who served as a member of the Task Force before assuming the role of chairperson upon her appointment as Chief Justice in October 2007. “All Task Force members consistently devoted countless hours in respectful collaboration and discussion to develop Child Support Guidelines that will benefit the children and families of the Commonwealth. These

guidelines preserve judicial discretion but also provide additional guidance to our courts in how to utilize that discretion.”

The comprehensive review by the Task Force included an examination of the assumptions, information and methodology that provide the basis for the guidelines, as well as consideration of comments submitted to the Administrative Office of the Trial Court and to Task Force members, and concerns raised at a series of public hearings conducted in 2005 and in early 2007.

Chief Justice Mulligan commended the Task Force for the investment of time and effort by all members throughout the entire review process. Full-day meetings were held monthly, except in February 2007 when three public hearings were conducted by Task Force members. Chief Justice Carey noted that Task Force members demonstrated enthusiasm and sustained commitment to the effort, devoting countless hours in and outside of meetings researching, drafting and gathering data.

The Task Force included stakeholders with diverse experience and interests who conducted a thorough review with engaging and thought-provoking discussions. It began its work in October 2006 under the leadership of then-Chief Justice Sean M. Dunphy who retired in August 2007.

The effective date of January 1, 2009, will provide sufficient time to orient and educate judges, court staff and practitioners on the details of the new guidelines.

Link to **Child Support Guidelines**: [www.mass.gov/courts/childsupport](http://www.mass.gov/courts/childsupport)

#### **Child Support Guidelines Task Force Members:**

- Hon. Paula M. Carey, Chief Justice of the Probate and Family Court (Chair)
- Hon. Sean M. Dunphy, Chief Justice of the Probate and Family Court, Chair until retirement in August 2007
- Marilynne R. Ryan, Esq., Massachusetts Bar Association (Vice Chair)
- Hon. Anthony Nesi, Associate Justice, Bristol Division Probate and Family Court
- Marilyn Ray Smith, Esq., Deputy Commissioner, Child Support Enforcement Division, Dept. of Revenue
- Fern L. Folin, Esq., American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers;
- Richard Gedeon, Esq., Boston Bar Association
- Gayle Stone-Turesky, Esq., Boston Bar Association
- Dr. Ned Holstein, Fathers and Families
- John Johnson, Chief Probation Officer, Hampden Division Probate and Family Court
- Christina Paradiso, Esq., Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts
- Robert J. Rivers, Jr., Esq., Lee & Levine
- Dr. Mark Sarro, Watermark Economics, LLC