Loyola starts online child law course
By Jerry Crimmins
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Loyola University Chicago School of Law is expanding its online course offerings by making them available in a new area of law.

Starting Sept. 6, Loyola's law school will partner with Concord Law School to offer a master of jurisprudence in children's law and policy.

This two-year degree program is aimed at nonlegal professionals who work with children and families, such as social workers, people in law enforcement, juvenile justice workers and health-care providers.

It is suitable for "anybody in any profession that serves children and families and needs some knowledge of law in order to do the job effectively," but doesn't seek to become a lawyer, said Diane C. Geraghty, director of the Civitas ChildLaw Center at Loyola.

Loyola started its first online program — in cooperation with Concord — in May 2008 in the health-law field. Loyola now offers two health degrees online, a master of jurisprudence in health law and an LLM degree in health law, said Kelley Yaccino, director of online legal education for the school.

About 75 people already obtained their health-related degrees from Loyola through online education, Yaccino said, and about 225 are enrolled for the fall semester.

"We knew this would be a winner," Yaccino said. "It's much more sane for working health-care professionals to take it online rather than come downtown to the campus, which was always a pain for them."

A master of jurisprudence in children's law and policy has been offered by Loyola Law on campus since 1995, Geraghty said. It is for people who don't seek to become lawyers but "wanted to understand how the law impacted their clients so they could advocate within the legal system on behalf of their clients," she said.

For instance, some people want to learn how to testify effectively in court. In Loyola's child law training, students "can participate as witnesses" in a class setting "and receive feedback on their performance," Geraghty said.

Formerly, people needed to live in the Chicago area to obtain this master of jurisprudence in children's law because "that's where all the classes were and that's where all the teachers were," Geraghty said.
"We frequently get calls from people in other places who say, 'I can't move to Chicago. Is there any other way I can do the program?'"

So in cooperation with Concord Law School, which is entirely online, Loyola decided to offer the master in jurisprudence in children's law online.

"It provides tremendous flexibility for people trying to meet the demands of their professional and personal life," Geraghty said. "They don't have to show up in a snowstorm. They can do it in their pajamas or after the kids go to bed."

The teachers will be from Loyola. Concord offers the experience in online courses, including impressive technology, Geraghty said.

Stephen Burnett, vice president for auxiliary business with Kaplan Legal Education and interim dean of Concord Law School, said, "Increased accessibility to legal education is a significant part of our school's mission. … This partnership with the Loyola University Chicago School of Law brings their first-rate curriculum to a broader audience."