

NEWS RELEASE

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Latest Medical Malpractice data shows sustained decline in case filings

HARRISBURG, April 25, 2006 — Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ralph J. Cappy today announced the release of state court system data on medical malpractice case filings and verdicts for 2005 that show a sustained decline in the number of med mal lawsuits filed statewide.

The AOPC began the systematic collection of data from each of Pennsylvania's 67 counties three years ago as part of the Judiciary's commitment to intergovernmental collaboration in addressing medical malpractice litigation issues. At that time, counties also began to create a means of methodically tracking medical malpractice case information to enhance the focus and accuracy of future annual data collections. New statewide rules of Civil Procedure were promulgated — Pa.R.C.P. 1018 and 1042.16 — to help identify med mal cases together with a new rule of Judicial Administration — Pa.R.J.A. 1904 — to codify the reporting requirements.

“These figures, which are improving in accuracy each year, continue to provide critical information that previously was unavailable to the Commonwealth's citizens in such a comprehensive format,” Chief Justice Cappy said. “As the data is examined in greater detail and evaluated over time, it is anticipated that the numbers will provide a foundation for more informed decision making by all three branches of state government.”

The 2005 data show the statewide total number of med mal filings and the number and amount of jury and non-jury verdicts. The attached Table 1 shows there were 1,698 filings in 2005. This represents a 37.8 percent decline from the base years 2000-2002, the period just prior to the Supreme Court's initiation of the certificate of merit and venue rules. Also attached are Tables 2 and 3 detailing medical malpractice jury and non-jury verdict amounts for the calendar year 2005.

In comparison to earlier years, Table 2 reports that calendar year 2005 had the fewest number of jury verdicts and the fewest number of verdicts exceeding \$1 million.

An extensive collection of medical malpractice litigation data, court rules and other related information may be viewed in a special section of the Pennsylvania Judiciary Web site at: www.courts.state.pa.us

(tables attached)