

## NEWS RELEASE

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*Procedures support intensive offender monitoring/treatment*

### Supreme Court of Pennsylvania Implements Statewide Procedures for Specialized Drug Courts

**HARRISBURG, November 3, 2005** — Guidelines for creating problem-solving courts in Pennsylvania have been approved by the state Supreme Court. Initially focused on creating additional courts that specialize in drug law violations by non-violent offenders, the guidelines establish statewide procedures for the courts' voluntary creation in the 57 Pennsylvania counties that do not presently have them.

The guidelines result from a joint venture by the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts and the Commission for Justice Initiatives, a judicial advisory group established in May 2004 by the Pennsylvania Bar Association at the request of the Supreme Court. The new guidelines apply only to adult defendants while similar procedures for juvenile "drug courts" remain under study by the commission and AOPC.

"My colleagues and I wholeheartedly approve the approach the commission has suggested and we thank its members for their hard work in this area," Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ralph J. Cappy said. "Statewide standards for 'drug courts' will enhance our trial courts' working relationships in local communities, ensure that these courts are both fair and effective, and better define expectations, rewards and consequences for adults whose cases are being adjudicated within the court system."

The Supreme Court action:

- Allows counties to voluntarily decide whether to establish a drug court – Courts that do not want to participate are not required to do so.
- Phases-in drug courts gradually statewide, recommending that five new courts be established in the initial year.
- Adheres to the "10 Key Components," the flexible framework created by the Drug Courts Program Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice that standardizes operations and outcomes while allowing for regional variation to make the best use of local resources.
- Supports the hiring of a staff member in the AOPC's Judicial Programs Department to help establish additional drug courts' and ensure their effective operation and establishes a multi-disciplinary Advisory Committee to assist the AOPC in oversight and administration.

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- Launches the development of performance measures and electronic reporting forms to ensure ongoing monitoring, evaluation and assessment of drug courts and the quality and efficacy of the services provided.
- Supports the need for both short- and long-term funding solutions through partnerships with the Pennsylvania Commission for Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) for start-up grants and ongoing discussions with the legislature on how to best accomplish state funding for the long-term health of drug courts.

Drug courts typically consider only specific non-violent drug offenses and provide offenders in these cases with a combination of intensive, coordinated sanctions and treatments. Managing such cases requires collaboration among the courts, local criminal justice practitioners, treatment providers, law enforcement and social service agencies.

Judicial monitoring, addiction treatment, frequent drug testing and intensive supervision distinguish drug courts. Statewide coordination of drug courts in Pennsylvania is envisioned with minimal additional resources, while the initial emphasis in local implementation of drug courts will be to maximize the use of available resources and start-up grants from PCCD and other sources. With sufficient experience and proven track records, longer-term funding needs may be identified that require more dedicated resources.

Each of Pennsylvania's judicial districts will be free to decide whether to develop and implement a drug court in their community. Exactly how they operate will be up to each community in accordance with the new statewide procedures.

"It's important to recognize that a 'cookie-cutter approach' does not necessarily fit every Pennsylvania county, given their widely varying populations, resources, numbers of judges and a variety of other factors," Chief Justice Cappy said. "For that reason and the absolute need for broad collaboration in making such courts successful, we particularly endorse the Justice Initiatives Commission's recommendation that implementation of drug or other types of problem-solving courts be at the option of each county."

*(A list of commission members is attached)*

Edward W. Madeira Jr., Esq., Chair, Philadelphia  
Barbara Adams, General Counsel of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Allegheny County Judge Cynthia A. Baldwin  
Bracken Burns, president, County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania  
State Attorney General Thomas W. Corbett  
Charles A. Cunningham, Esq., first assistant defender, Defender Association of Philadelphia  
Erie County Judge Stephanie Domitrovich  
State Rep. William H. DeWeese, House Democrat Leader, Greene County  
Superior Court Judge Kate Ford Elliott, Allegheny County  
Thomas M. Golden, Esq., Berks County  
State Sen. Stewart J. Greenleaf, Senate Judiciary Chair, Montgomery County  
Rev. Brenda J. Gregg, senior pastor, Greater Allen AME Church, Allegheny County  
Centre County Judge Thomas King Kistler  
Garry Maddox, president, World Wide Concessions Inc., Philadelphia  
Lehigh County District Attorney James B. Martin  
Lynn A. Marks, Esq., Pennsylvanians for Modern Courts, Philadelphia  
Pamela Jane Mayer, Esq., Cambria County  
Leslie Anne Miller, Esq., Montgomery County  
Superior Court Judge Jack Panella, Northampton County  
Chester County Judge Paula F. Ott  
Michael H. Reed, Esq., immediate past president, Pennsylvania Bar Association  
Arthur H. Stroyd Jr., Esq., Allegheny County  
Allegheny County District Attorney Stephen A. Zappala Jr.

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