

NEWS RELEASE

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Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

Latest Medical Malpractice data show stable decline in case filings

HARRISBURG, April 25, 2007 — Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ralph J. Cappy today announced the release of state court system data on medical malpractice case filings and verdicts for 2006 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.

“The latest statistics provide a significant reference point as Pennsylvania's courts continue to handle complex medical malpractice litigation cases each year with the kind of efficiency and expeditiousness that the Commonwealth's citizens have come to expect,” Chief Justice Cappy said. “And ongoing enhancements to our analysis and collection techniques will ensure that interested parties can continue to have confidence in the data reporting process.”

The 2006 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 1,693 filings in 2006. This represents a 38 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. In Philadelphia, the state's largest judicial district, the decline has been over 50 percent. Also attached are Tables 2 and 3 detailing medical malpractice jury and non-jury verdict amounts for the calendar year 2006.

In comparison to earlier years, Table 2 reports that calendar year 2006 had the fewest number of jury verdicts resulting in plaintiff awards. Table 3, which includes non-jury cases, contains a total of three defense verdicts and one plaintiff verdict for 2006, a rate that is consistent with statistics in prior years.

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)

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