

NEWS RELEASE

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Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

Latest Medical Malpractice data shows continued decline in number of cases and verdicts

HARRISBURG, April 14, 2008 — Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ronald D. Castille today announced the release of state court system data on medical malpractice case filings and verdicts for 2007 that show a further decline in the number of lawsuits filed statewide.

In 2007, there were 1,617 filings, representing a 40.8 percent decline from the “base years” 2000-2002 (shown in Table 1, attached). In Philadelphia, the state’s judicial district with the largest caseload, the decline has been more than 50 percent during the same period.

The base years are the period just prior to two significant rule changes made by the Supreme Court. The first change required attorneys to obtain from a medical professional a certificate of merit that establishes **that** the medical **procedures** in a case **fall** outside acceptable standards. A second change required medical malpractice actions to be brought only in the county where the cause of action takes place — a move aimed at eliminating so-called “venue shopping.” Tables 2 and 3 detail medical malpractice jury and non-jury verdict amounts for 2007. In comparison to earlier years, Tables 2 and 3 show that 2007 had the fewest number of verdicts resulting in plaintiff awards.

“The latest statistics provide additional evidence that the sharp drop in medical malpractice litigation, which began in 2003, was not a temporary correction, but a sustained response to the procedural rule changes adopted by the Supreme Court and the statutory changes enacted by the General Assembly,” Chief Justice Castille said. “Ongoing review and enhancements to our procedures will ensure that **both plaintiffs and defendants** can rely on an accessible court system where professional liability actions are impartially and promptly resolved.”

The AOPC began the systematic collection of data from each of Pennsylvania’s 67 counties four years ago as part of the Judiciary’s commitment to intergovernmental collaboration in addressing medical malpractice litigation issues. Counties also began to methodically track med mal case information to enhance the focus and accuracy of 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. An extensive collection of data, rules and other information may be viewed on the Medical Malpractice resource page of the Pennsylvania Judiciary’s Web site at: www.courts.state.pa.us

[\(tables, rules attached\)](#)

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