



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

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Pennsylvania Supreme Court accredits first Drug Court to recognize quality and accountability

HARRISBURG — The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania today accredited the first problem-solving court in the Commonwealth as part of an effort to promote statewide standards and boost integrity in adult drug and alcohol treatment programs that serve as alternatives to jail for eligible defendants.

Recognition of the Lancaster County Court of Common Pleas Drug Court Program came today during a special ceremony where Justice Seamus P. McCaffery was the main speaker. Justice McCaffery was appointed by Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ronald D. Castille as liaison to Pennsylvania's problem-solving courts initiative.

“Accreditation complements the existing value of Pennsylvania’s problem-solving courts program by boosting performance standards and guidelines at no cost to the Commonwealth’s citizens,” Justice McCaffery said. “Lancaster County, and others seeking this designation, ought to be commended for making a commitment to quality and accountability. Accreditation is a demonstration of that commitment.”

The Supreme Court approved an Accreditation Program for Adult Drug and DUI courts in July 2011 after more than a year of development by a committee that included a judge, public defender, district attorney, drug and alcohol counselor, probation and parole officers, and representatives of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, Pennsylvania Sentencing Commission and the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts. More than three dozen Adult Drug courts and another 14 DUI courts have been launched across the Commonwealth under the Supreme Court’s direction, thanks to a pattern of proven results that curb costs and recidivism.

The voluntary accreditation process gives counties a gauge of how a court’s operations compare to proven nationally recognized practices. Approval also brings enhanced recognition through accreditation — such as today’s ceremony in Lancaster County — and boosts prospects for available grants and other funding to continue the work.

Pennsylvania is believed to be one of only a handful of states employing the accreditation process, which varies by state. Six accreditation applications currently are pending before the AOPC, whose problem-solving courts program administrator recommends for approval after an internal committee review. The application process can take up to two months to complete.

(For more info: <http://www.pacourts.us/NR/rdonlyres/F15BF8CB-44E7-43CC-BC64-7F5A9C769577/0/DrugDUIAccredProgram.pdf>)

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