



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

## News for Immediate Release

Sept. 18, 2014

### Supreme Court Adopts Changes to Conduct Rules for MDJs

**HARRISBURG** — Magisterial district judges now have new guidelines to govern their actions both on the bench and outside the courtroom.

The policies are part of a revised version of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges that the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania issued today. The new rules take effect Dec. 1, 2014.

The guidelines are designed to bring greater clarity to rules affecting the conduct of Pennsylvania’s magisterial district judges, rules that have not changed significantly in 40 years. They complement a similar rules overhaul approved earlier this year applicable to conduct standards for trial and appellate jurists that had been in place without revision since 1973.

The new set of rules for magisterial district judges mirror many of the rules for trial and appellate jurists that took effect last month. Much of the updating was based on language used in a model judicial code adopted by the American Bar Association and guidelines used in other states.

These rules differ from the recently adopted rules applicable to other judges and justices in Pennsylvania because MDJs are not required to have a law degree and they may have outside employment that does not conflict with their judicial duties.

“We are fully committed to maintaining the public’s trust and confidence in the judicial process,” Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ronald D. Castille said. “These updates help enhance the integrity of our court system so its fairness can remain beyond question.”

Judges who violate the rules can be suspended or removed from office. A judicial disciplinary process laid out in the state constitution provides for an independent agency — the Judicial Conduct Board — to investigate misconduct complaints about jurists and prosecute misconduct violations when appropriate.

The new rules apply to the 526 magisterial district judges in Pennsylvania. The following are links to the Supreme Court Order and the new code of conduct:

[Order](#)

[Code of Conduct](#)

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