



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

News for Immediate Release

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Pennsylvania Problem-Solving Courts Hold First Statewide Mental Health Courts Training

HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania problem-solving courts will hold their first statewide mental health courts training during a two-day conference on Mon., Dec. 10, and Tues., Dec 11. The conference will begin at 9 a.m. on Monday and 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday at the Crowne Plaza, 23 S. 2nd St., Harrisburg, Pa 17101.

“This training is a first for us,” said Angela Sobol Lowry, problem-solving courts administrator. “It’s specifically geared towards mental health courts, and we’re hoping teams can take back some of what they’ve learned here to apply in their own courts.”

The conference agenda includes a wide range of keynote speakers including mental health researchers and advocates, as well as experienced problem-solving court judges and program administrators from across the country.

Training topics that will be covered at the conference include:

- Mental health courts incentives and sanctions;
- Motivational interviewing;
- Screening and assessment in mental health courts; and
- Evidence-based practices

With over 125 people registered to attend, almost every mental health court in the state will be represented at the conference, with most courts bringing their entire team.

As the number of defendants with serious and often untreated mental illnesses in the criminal justice system continues to dramatically increase, traditional court practices prove to be ineffective at changing the outcomes for many of these defendants. Mental health court staff work with other mental health professionals to screen and assess defendants, develop treatment plans and supervise offenders.

Pennsylvania currently has 116 problem-solving courts statewide, 22 of which are mental health courts. These treatment courts focus on providing behavioral health treatment services in a structured court setting whereby practitioners from the criminal justice system and mental health fields work together to better address this population.

The success of these courts is proven by a decrease in both the number of repeat offenders and costs associated with jail time, as well as by the many strengthened families and improved lives of its participants.

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