



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

News for Immediate Release

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Autism and Dependency Court Summit to Educate and Train Central Region Dependency Court Personnel and Partners

HARRISBURG — Spearheaded by Supreme Court Justice Kevin Dougherty on behalf of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, a central-region summit was held today in Lewisburg, Pa., on Autism 101, diagnosis and community support to educate and train local courthouse personnel, child welfare professionals and dependency court partners, including juvenile and adult probation and other community providers.

“Education and awareness are critical to ensuring we are providing for the needs of all Dependency Court users, especially those with Autism,” Dougherty said. “The more we learn, the more we grow as a system and as a community, but most importantly in our ability to be part of the type of positive change that will impact Pennsylvania families.”

Attendees represented 60 different organizations, including local children and youth, courthouse personnel, law enforcement, schools and community service providers. Speakers for the central-region summit included:

- Justice Kevin Dougherty, Supreme Court of Pennsylvania
- Dr. Bernardine Suppa, PhD, Psychologist
- Lindy Mishler, MS, Clinical Consultant for the Bureau of Supports for Autism and Special Populations, Office of Developmental Programs

The first regional summit was held earlier this week in the northeast region. The summits are part of a five-county, regional effort to expand locally on the work that the statewide Autism and Dependency Court taskforce has undertaken.

With nearly one in 44 children and one in 56 adults* diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), judges are sure to have individuals living with autism come before them. The primary goal of the Autism and Dependency Court Taskforce is to provide a positive dependency court experience for children and parents with ASD by increasing professional awareness and responsiveness.

The planning committee for the regional summits included:

- Judge Ryan Tira, Lead Dependency Judge, Lycoming County
- Matthew Salvatori, Children and Youth Administrator, Lycoming County
- President Judge Michael Sholley, Snyder and Union Counties
- Jennifer Napp-Evans, Children and Youth Administrator, Snyder County
- Matt Erst, Children and Youth Administrator, Union County
- Judge Jennifer Rogers, Lead Dependency Judge, Luzerne County
- Kerry Browning, Children and Youth Administrator, Lackawanna County

For more information, visit www.ocfcpacourts.us.

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**Statistic from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network, 2018*