



News for Immediate Release

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Pennsylvania Courts Host Fourth-Regional Summit to Address Growing Behavioral Health Crisis

HARRISBURG — As behavioral health challenges continue to affect communities across Pennsylvania and the nation, the Pennsylvania Courts together with Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Debra Todd, Supreme Court Justice Kevin M. Dougherty and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, today held its fourth summit in Pittsburgh.

“Our work today is not just important, it’s essential. Behavioral health extends into every facet of our justice system, which means the choices we make and the collaborations we form can alter the course of a person’s life. Lasting progress will come from our shared commitment to understanding and action,” said Chief Justice Debra Todd.

Spearheaded by Justice Dougherty, these events are part of the Behavioral Health in the Courts initiative and are designed to strengthen partnerships among the judiciary, system partners, behavioral health providers and community stakeholders to improve outcomes for individuals with behavioral health challenges who come into contact with the justice system.

“The role of the courts extends far beyond the courtroom,” said Justice Dougherty. “How we respond to the behavioral health crisis – through partnership, innovation and empathy – defines the kind of justice we deliver and the futures we help shape.”

“Every sector of our communities feels the strain of the behavioral health crisis — families, educators, employers, first responders, and courts alike,” said Justice Dougherty. “Breaking down barriers to care is essential if we are to help individuals find stability and hope.”

“In courtrooms across the Commonwealth, judges encounter the realities of mental illness daily. We recognize that while we cannot fix this crisis alone, we have both the responsibility and opportunity to be part of the solution.”

“These regional gatherings allow us to listen, learn and work together toward responses that are compassionate, coordinated and effective.”

Today’s summit in Allegheny County marks the fourth of seven planned statewide meetings, bringing together judges, court staff, behavioral health professionals, county and state officials, law enforcement and others working at the intersection of justice and behavioral health.

The goal of these summits is to share best practices, address challenges, and continue building a coordinated approach that prioritizes treatment and support over cyclical court involvement and

incarceration.

Summit sessions include discussions on key issues with partners to address mental and behavioral health challenges affecting communities in Pennsylvania including representatives from law enforcement and the behavioral health communities.

“These summits bring together a wealth of knowledge and experience that guide us toward meaningful reform,” said Court Administrator of Pennsylvania Andrea Tuominen. “Real progress happens when we work together. Our partnerships form the backbone of this effort, ensuring that every part of the system moves in the same direction — toward better outcomes for the people we serve.”

The Behavioral Health in the Courts initiative supports court-led strategies to better connect individuals with services and reduce the cycle of crisis, arrest and recidivism. The regional summits will focus on practical strategies for collaboration, diversion programs, crisis response and access to person-centered care.

More information about the summits and the Behavioral Health in the Courts initiative is available through the Pennsylvania Courts website and social media ([Facebook](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#)).

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