



News for Immediate Release

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Pennsylvania Courts Host Third Regional Summit to Address Growing Behavioral Health Crisis

HARRISBURG — Focused on meeting the challenges of the growing behavioral health crisis sweeping the Commonwealth 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 third summit in Bedford County.

“The behavioral health crisis reaches into every corner of our justice system, and that is why our work here today is not only important – it is urgent,” said Chief Justice Todd. “The decisions we make, and the partnerships we build, have the power to redirect a person’s entire life. The scope of this issue is vast, but so is our opportunity to make a difference.”

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.

“Mental health concerns in Pennsylvania are no longer hidden or marginal – they have emerged as a broad crisis affecting every aspect of life throughout the commonwealth,” said Supreme Court Justice Kevin M. Dougherty.

“The pressure is deeply felt by families, educational institutions, employers, emergency medical services – and our courts. A major challenge in tackling behavioral health concerns is dismantling the barriers that stop people from accessing the care and support they need.

“Throughout the Commonwealth, judges are increasingly encountering cases where mental illness plays a central role—whether in criminal proceedings, family law or child welfare cases. The urgent necessity for effective behavioral health resources is clear. Although the courts cannot resolve this crisis on their own, we are committed to being an essential part of the solution.

“These regional summits provide an invaluable opportunity for all stakeholders to join forces, ensuring our approaches are better informed, more compassionate and ultimately more effective.”

Today’s summit in Bedford County is the third 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 is to share best practices, address challenges, and continue building a coordinated approach that prioritizes treatment and support over cyclical court involvement and incarceration.

Sessions during the summit will include discussions on key issues with partners to address mental and behavioral health challenges in Pennsylvania including representatives from law enforcement and the behavioral health communities.

“We appreciate the expertise brought to these regional summits, which bring us closer to addressing system gaps,” Court Administrator of Pennsylvania Andrea Tuominen said. “While the courts have an important role, partnerships are essential as lasting progress depends on these relationships. They are the cornerstone of our efforts, as no single institution can effectively confront these complex challenges alone.”

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 Court initiative is available through the Pennsylvania Courts website and social media ([Facebook](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#))

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