

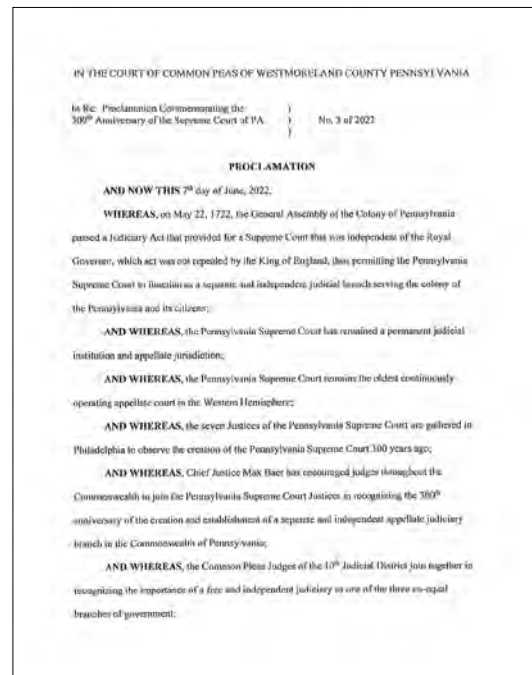
AOPC CONNECTED



Issue 3, 2022

In this issue

Read about the Court's recently-established Judicial Ethics Advisory Board that will begin rendering advice in July, a department spotlight on Research and Statistics, various judicial conferences and trainings attended by AOPC and court staff, county court highlights and more.



Supreme Court of Pennsylvania celebrates 300th Anniversary

A series of events held in Philadelphia on May 18 - May 20 commemorated the 300th anniversary of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania.

The Judiciary Act of May 22, 1722 permanently created the Supreme Court as the highest court of the Commonwealth, predating the United States Supreme Court by some seventy years and serving as a model for that later court.

The Supreme Court conducted its May oral argument session on May 18 in Philadelphia's Old City Hall, where the Court held sessions in its early days. The historic session was livestreamed and available to the public.

On May 19 and 20, a symposium was held at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, with speakers that included US Supreme Court Associate Justice Anthony Kennedy, federal judges from the Third Circuit Court of Appeals, the Chief Justices of the Pennsylvania, Ohio, South Carolina and Rhode Island Supreme Court, other Pennsylvania Justices, law professors from ten different law schools, historians and lawyers.

The symposium covered an arc beginning with the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's history and how the Court's decisions are interwoven with the history of the Commonwealth, how state courts interact with one another and with the federal court system, the decision-making processes of state supreme

courts, and the administration of Pennsylvania's statewide judicial system and its impact on the lives of Pennsylvania citizens.

The symposium sessions were again publicly available via livestream, and were also available to judges and lawyers for continuing education purposes.

The preparation for the 300th anniversary also included updating a pamphlet history about the Supreme Court and the Pennsylvania judicial system, creating and posting biographical materials about current and former Supreme Court justices, and ongoing work to identify and preserve court artifacts for future generations. Materials be accessed on the [Supreme300 webpage](#). ▲

Pa. Supreme Court Establishes New Judicial Ethics Advisory Board

The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania recently announced the creation and membership of a new judicial ethics advisory board to ensure the continued integrity and public trust of the state’s judiciary.

Established by a Court Order issued in January, the Judicial Ethics Advisory Board (JEAB) is charged with rendering advisory opinions concerning proper conduct under the Code of Judicial Conduct and the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges.

The Court appointed **Brian D. Jacisin** as the Board’s executive director, and later announced its membership. Prior to his appointment, Jacisin served for nearly 16 years as legal counsel to the Pennsylvania State Ethics Commission – most recently as its chief counsel.

The Board’s inaugural members will include:

- Hon. **Victor P. Stabile**, Judge of the Superior Court of Pennsylvania
- Hon. **Lori A. Dumas**, Judge of the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania
- Hon. **Stephen P. B. Minor**, President Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, Potter County
- Hon. **Edward D. Reibman**, Senior Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, Lehigh County
- Hon. **Linda Rovder Fleming**, Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, Cambria County

- Hon. **Patrick F. Dugan**, President Judge of the Philadelphia Municipal Court
- Hon. **David J. Barton**, Judge of the Allegheny County Magisterial District Court
- Hon. **Jennifer J. Patton Clancy**, Judge of the York County Magisterial District Court
- Jayne F. Duncan, Esquire, Lancaster County

“A single board, with broader representation, adequate staff, and well-trained members will provide not only prompt and reliable advice to judges and judicial candidates, but also an accessible database of advisory opinions and general guidance which can be referenced and followed moving forward,” said Pennsylvania Supreme Court Chief Justice **Max Baer**.

“The Court appreciates the valuable work performed by the judges who have served on the Special Court Judges Association of Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania Conference of State Trial Judges Ethics Committees, and we are confident that the JEAB will build on that history to provide continued support for judges statewide.”

The JEAB rules will provide for certain protections, known as the “rule of reliance,” where judges request and follow JEAB ethics advice. The Board will start rendering advice and guidance beginning July 1 when those provisions go into effect, replacing the current committees and rules of reliance. ▲



*(l to r) Front row: President Judge **Stephen Minor**, Judge **Linda Rovder Fleming**.*

*Back row: Judge **Victor Stabile**, Judge **Edward Reibman**, Judge **Lori Dumas**, Jayne Duncan, Judge **Jennifer Clancy**, Judge **Patrick Dugan**, Judge **David Barton**.*

*Not pictured: **Brian Jacisin**.*

Pa Superior Court holds special historical program



Luzerne County President Judge Michael T. Vough

On June 22, the Superior Court of Pennsylvania held a special ceremony reflecting on the origins and history of the Court.

The ceremony took place in the Luzerne County Courthouse and paid special tribute to the Court's first President Judge, Honorable Charles E. Rice (1895 – 1915) – a trial judge from Luzerne County.

Led by Superior Court President Judge **Jack A. Panella**, speakers included Luzerne County President Judge **Michael T. Vough** and President Judge Emeritus **Correale F. Stevens**, the president of the Wilkes-Barre Preservation Society and past and present leadership from the Wilkes Barre Law & Library Association, speaking on behalf of members of the Luzerne County Bar Association. ▲

more information

For more information about the Superior Court, visit <http://www.pacourts.us/courts/superior-court/> or the website of the Superior Court Historical Society at <https://www.superiorcourthistory.org/>.



Superior Court President Judge Emeritus **Correale F. Stevens**, Judge **Daniel McCaffery**, President Judge **Jack Panella**, Judge **Megan King**, Judge **Maria McLaughlin**, President Judge Emeritus **John Bender** and Judge **Victor Stabile**.



Minor Judiciary Education Board pictured. (Front row, l to r) Deborah Gross, Esq., Hon. Karen Eisner Zucker, Hon. Denise Snyder Thiel, Fran Fencel, Hon. Richard King, Andy Simpson. (Back row, l to r) Darren Breslin, Esq., Kimberly Booth, Hon. Douglas Bell, Nick Wachinski, Esq., Stephen Feiler, PhD.

AOPC Attends National Judicial College Workshop

At the end of April, representatives from the Pennsylvania Courts and others attended the National Judicial College's two-day workshop focused on course and faculty development.

Hearing from experienced educators and industry leaders, the AOPC's Judicial Education department, along with members of the Pennsylvania Conference of State

Trial Judges Education Committee and the Minor Judiciary Education Board, participated in the training.

Attendees left with some valuable takeaways and a more advanced understanding about adult learning theory, drafting learning objectives, designing courses and incorporating learning activities into educational programs for the Pennsylvania Judiciary. ▲

Classrooms vs. Courtrooms

By Emma Cantor, AOPC Communications intern

In May, Washington County Magisterial District Judge (MDJ) **John Bruner** presented his program, *Classrooms vs. Courtrooms*, to elementary and middle school students in McGuffey School District.

The program has three goals: 1.) promote constitutional education, 2.) increase knowledge about the judicial branch of government and 3.) encourage good student behavior.

Specifically focused on these goals, MDJ Bruner aims to remind students about the importance of national holidays and learning about our country's history by including lessons about recognitions such as Memorial and Independence Day.

Moreover, he discusses vaping, truancy and impulse control in an effort to promote positive student behavior and prevent bad habits from forming at a young age. ▲

“Educating a child about bad school behaviors in their classroom versus rendering a decision against them in our courtroom – that here is the focus. Students belong inside classrooms, not courtrooms. This education piece also promotes constitutional and civics education which is so important to their growth as American citizens,”
MDJ Bruner explained.

New Court Administrator Class of 2022

In May, new county court administrators across the state gathered at the Pennsylvania Judicial Center to learn about their responsibilities and benefit from each other's knowledge and experience.

While specific tasks and circumstances vary for each judicial district, the primary responsibilities begin at the core of court administration with caseload and workflow management.

Led by seasoned court administrators and AOPC staff, presentations on leadership, human resource management and relationship building with key stakeholders (i.e., president judges, county executives, court staff etc.) were well received.

The training also provided guidance on issues surrounding court security,



Left to right: **Laurie Sacerdote** (Montgomery), **Rick Pierce**, **Kristen Edwards** (Susquehanna), **Julianne Zaleski** (Lackawanna), **Tricia Sorg** (Allegheny), **Kayla Kahler** (Clinton), **Tricia Norwood-Foden** (Chester), **Nicole Collins** (Cambria), **Michelle Miller** (Lancaster), **Darlene Miller** (Philadelphia), **Joe Mittleman**, **Christine Stuck** (Mifflin), **Rachel Burchfield** (Mifflin), **Mary Timpany** (Schuylkill), **Cathleen Lythgoe** (Blair), **Stephanie Siko** (Philadelphia), **Barbara Bosar** (Blair), **Chris Waters** (Philadelphia), **Christy Beane**, **Roseanne Unger** (Philadelphia)

right-to-know/public access, language access and other essential components

of court operations and personnel management. ▲



Cat comes to court

In May, Delaware County court staff spotted a cat hanging around the building, a little too close to the street. They brought her in, and ran to the store to get food, litter and a toy for her.

Meanwhile, a constable with some excellent investigation skills went looking for her humans, and a while after having lunch, a lot of playtime with her new toy, and a nice nap in Judge **Lee Grimes'** arms, she was picked up by her humans who said her name was Sky.

Thank you to all the court staff and the constable who made Sky's field trip to the court a huge success! ▲



Marisa Lehr

New Court Access Coordinator

Court Access Coordinator **Marisa Lehr** joined the AOPC in May, replacing Mary Vilter, who retired at the end of April following 16 years of service with the AOPC.

Marisa has substantial previous experience serving the Commonwealth – both as deputy attorney general for the Litigation Section of the Civil Law Division and as deputy general counsel for the Governor's Office of General Counsel.

Marisa's office is located on the 6th floor of the Pennsylvania Judicial Center and staff are encouraged to reach out with any questions or concerns regarding language access or disability/ADA access in the judiciary. ▲



Emma Cantor



Joseph Crowley



Brandon Shepherd

AOPC Welcomes New Interns

The AOPC Legal and Communications Departments have both recently welcomed new interns who will have the opportunity to learn firsthand about the judiciary while gaining valuable experience working in state government and their fields of interest.

Meet the Interns

Joseph M. Crowley and **Brandon Shepherd** are first-year law students at Penn State Dickinson School of Law and are expected to receive their Juris Doctor degrees in May 2024.

Joseph graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Colorado State University in May 2021, while Brandon obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree from Western Illinois University in July 2020.

Joseph and Brandon will be interning with the AOPC/Legal department from May 2022 to May 2023 and will be responsible for providing administrative and legal support services to the deputy chief counsel, as well as the deputy court administrator's office.

Emma Cantor is a first-year undergraduate student at James Madison University, where she studies Communications and Political Science working towards her Bachelor of Science degree and previously worked as a pro-bono intern with Mid-Penn Legal Services in Harrisburg.

Emma will help support AOPC/Communications office's internal and external outreach efforts, including social media, the development of press materials and the AOPCconnected newsletter.

Please join us in welcoming them to the AOPC! ▲

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Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

Max Baer

Chief Justice of Pennsylvania

Debra Todd

Justice

Christine Donohue

Justice

Kevin M. Dougherty

Justice

David N. Wecht

Justice

Sallie Updyke Mundy

Justice

P. Kevin Brobson

Justice

PJ/PACM Conference

June 12-14, 2022



Front (l to r) **Lisa Siciliano** – Regional Director, **Mark Singer** – Past President, **Carolynn Perry** – President, **Mary Wilt** – Secretary.
Back (l to r) **Paul Hindmarsh** – Regional Director, **Heidi Shiderty** – Vice President, **Lauren Harbison** – Regional Director, **Patrick Grimm** – Regional Director, **Amy DeMatt** – President Elect, **Christy Donofrio** – Treasurer.
Not pictured: **Angharad Stock** and **Bobby Sisock** – Regional Directors



2nd Annual Lebanon County Veterans Court softball tournament

To complete the community service project that is required of all Lebanon County Veterans Court participants to graduate from the program, one participant organized a softball tournament involving veterans courts in neighboring counties (Berks, Dauphin, Lancaster and York). While Lebanon County met Lancaster County in the championship last summer, Lancaster County walked away the victor. The tournament was such a success that it is now an annual event where families and friends are welcome to attend. ▲

DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT:

Research and Statistics

AOPC's Department of Research & Statistics provides statewide statistical measures of court caseloads, programs and operations.



l to r: Kim Nieves, Amanda Pereira, Yan Liu, Andrew Ginder

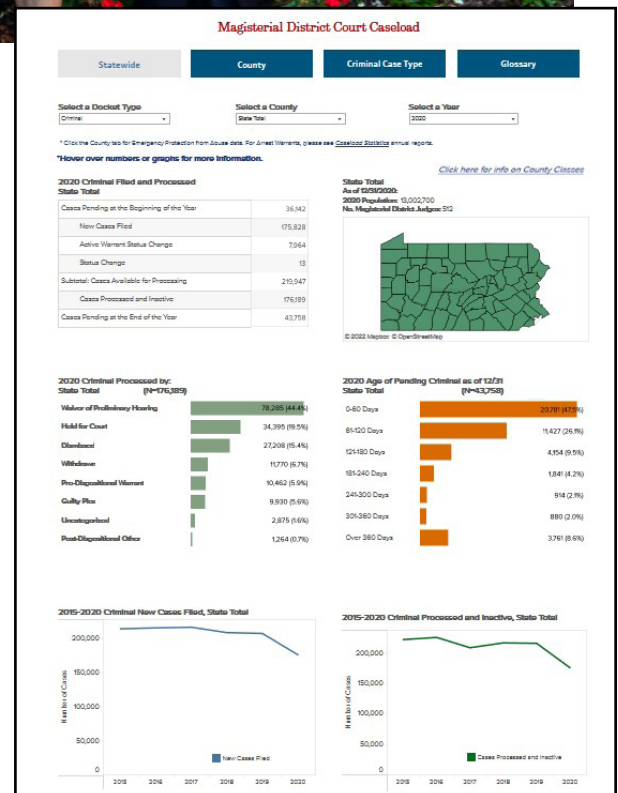
The Research team collects data from various court divisions in the judicial districts and AOPC's own automated case management systems to publish monthly and annual reports.

Each year, the Annual Caseload Statistics of the Unified Judicial System (UJS) are published as the official measure of state court operations. These figures are provided to legislators, the media, academic study initiatives, national data repositories and the public on the Pa. Courts website and its interactive dashboards.

In the interim, timely caseload data by counties are updated monthly online via the Caseload Highlights Report.

Another significant role of the department is to coordinate and conduct studies that help inform policy and practice improvements to the administration of justice.

In addition to original research, the Research team also conducts statewide surveys, provides data collection and analysis, and builds infographics such as charts, graphs, maps and interactive dashboards to supplement the work of various work groups and committees. ▲



Achieving Procedural Justice in the Virtual World

By Rick Pierce, AOPC Judicial Programs administrator

Every court user has two “needs” that come with expectations of our courts. The first need is what Mark Moore, Harvard University professor and author of the book “Recognizing Public Value” calls the human need – or how one desires to be greeted and treated while doing business with the court.

Moore calls the second need the “business need,” or addressing why they came to court. Each need comes with expectations the court user has of the court and its employees. Every day courts grapple with meeting both needs of every court user in a satisfactory manner. This process is called procedural fairness or procedural justice.

Every litigant or court user expects to be treated with dignity and respect, have an opportunity to tell their side of the story, have their case be treated equitably and fairly among all other cases and be resolved in an expeditious and timely manner. Lastly the court customer desires a comprehension of the process and application of the law the court used in rendering its decision.

The AOPC/Judicial District Operations department offered a sixty-minute virtual training session led by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) on this topic of procedural fairness. Principal Management Consultants Danielle Hirsch and Zach Zarnow of NCSC provided insight to over 60 jurists and court administrators on procedural justice. Hirsch and Zarnow paid particular attention to remote court proceedings.

The COVID-19 public health crisis and resultant physical separation and isolation made it paramount for the courts to find a means of continuous operations when the public

is not able to have physical access to the court facility. Virtual hearings provide opportunities for access to justice for all. The convenience of participating somewhere besides the confines of a courtroom meant the court may conduct its business anywhere.

Still, courts must continue to address barriers to access to justice such as the court’s acceptance and comprehension that the virtual courtroom may be a litigant’s living room, or kitchen with other household members who may or may not be a distraction to the party. Danielle and Zach shared personal experiences of jurists they interviewed who have presided over such hearings.

Each jurist noted the court must have patience and understanding. Most of all, the court should express empathy toward the court participant, especially when the challenge to participate remotely may be greater than in person. Empathy requires perspective taking. Taking the challenged court user’s perspective enables access and creates more inclusivity into our justice system.

The webinar was recorded and can be watched here: <https://vimeo.com/704262464/050c6004b6>

Additionally, other webinars on remote court proceedings produced by NCSC may be found here: [Webinars | NCSC](#) .



more information

For more information on this, please contact AOPC Judicial Programs Administrator Rick Pierce at rick.pierce@pacourts.us.

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New Judge School



Sixty newly elected and appointed Magisterial District Judges (MDJs) participated in the Minor Judiciary Education Board's (MJEB) Supplemental Practicum for New MDJs in early May at the Pennsylvania Judicial Center. ▲



Wellness Court Training

A group of Pennsylvania judges recently traveled to Denver, Colorado to attend a three-day training — 'Drugs in America Today: What Every Judge Needs to Know.' ▲

(l to r) Montgomery County Judge **Steven O'Neill**, Lancaster County Judge **Jeffrey Wright**, York County Judge **Matt Menges**, Northampton County Judge **Craig Dally**, Dauphin County Judge **William Tully**, and presenters Carl Dawson and Judge Alan Blankenship from Stone County, Missouri.



Managing your distress in the aftermath of a shooting

The attack on students and teachers at Robb Elementary School was a horrifying event for the community of Uvalde, Texas and a painful reminder of past tragedies for communities across the United States that have experienced school shootings.

As authorities investigate, now is the time to focus on accepting the concerns mass shootings create, understanding what you can do to protect yourself and your loved ones from harm, and helping younger family members address the emotional stress that might develop when they feel unsure and unsafe away from home.

Below are links to tip sheets and additional resources to distribute to your employees, family members or friends.

Printable Tip Sheets

The following tip sheets offer simple tips on coping with tragedy, managing traumatic stress and talking to children impacted by trauma. Download, print and share these resources with employees, household members or anyone in your community who may need assistance coping with this event.

- [Coping with a Traumatic Event](#)
- [Coping with Tragedy: A Guide to Dealing with Shock and Grief](#)
- [Coping with Traumatic Events in the News](#)
- [Helping Others Cope with Tragedy](#)
- [Managing Traumatic Stress](#)
- [Talking to Children About Traumatic Events](#)

Excerpt reprinted with permission from BHS Focus ©2022

Pa Courts Promote Elder Abuse Awareness

This month, the Pennsylvania Courts, including the Pennsylvania Supreme Court Advisory Council on Elder Justice in the Courts, recognized World Elder Abuse Awareness Day by highlighting the importance of identifying and understanding elder abuse for one of Pa.'s most vulnerable populations.

*“Paying attention to the warning signs of neglect, physical, emotional and sexual abuse, as well as financial exploitation is absolutely critical in protecting seniors and vulnerable adults. We know that for each case of elder abuse that gets reported to authorities, there are often dozens more that never come to light,” said Pa. Supreme Court Justice **Debra Todd**. “Elder abuse can happen to you, your neighbor or your loved ones – but we can help protect seniors by remaining vigilant and learning the warning signs.”*

Part of the awareness and education efforts extended to the county level as well. On June 17, Montgomery County held its 7th Annual Elder Justice Conference – the theme of which was ‘Exploring Alternatives to Guardianship’.

Statewide leader in guardianship reform and longtime chair of the Roundtable Keynote, Administrative Orphan’s Court Judge **Lois Murphy**, was not only instrumental in the planning the conference, but also served as its keynote speaker.



Following a description of the status of guardianships within the court system, a distinguished panel of experts and workshop presenters discussed their varied experiences and perspectives from the fields being discussed. ▲

#WorldElderAbuseAwarenessDay social media graphics developed and posted by the Pa. Courts

WHAT IS ELDER ABUSE?

It is any physical, sexual, or psychological abuse of individuals aged 60 and older.

AND IT HAPPENS MORE THAN YOU THINK.



WHAT ARE THE 7 TYPES OF ELDER ABUSE?

1. Physical Abuse
2. Sexual Abuse
3. Psychological Abuse
4. Neglect
5. Abandonment
6. Financial Exploitation
7. Self-Neglect



\$2.6 billion

is lost annually due to elder financial abuse and exploitation.



WEDNESDAY
June 15th
WORLD ELDER ABUSE
AWARENESS DAY



Jefferson County Courthouse Active Shooter Drill

It started out as a calm, peaceful Friday morning in downtown Brookville. Finally, a break in the rain with sunny skies. Main Street was coming alive for the day and preparations were underway for the annual Laurel Festival. But all that changed at 8:53 a.m. when two actors entered the Jefferson County Courthouse shooting anyone in their way.

WAIT! This was only an exercise! However, this scenario is all too common in our country.

Smoke grenades were lit, and explosives and gunfire could be heard throughout the building. Employees and citizens started to evacuate and by-standers on the street offered any assistance they could give. What felt like an eternity ended 3 minutes later when law enforcement took one shooter into custody and wounded the second shooter. Several people were critically hurt.

In an effort to keep employees, elected officials and visitors safe, Jefferson County organized and conducted this drill. After months of training, it was time to put some of this to the test in a full-scale exercise that was facilitated by the Jefferson County Department of Emergency Services.

The Sheriff's Office and Probation Officers were first on the scene, followed by Brookville Police Department. Jefferson County EMS and Brookville Volunteer Fire Company were also summoned to the scene. While the exercise was designed to strengthen the security measures for the county, the other participating agencies added to the realistic approach that was needed to make this seem as real as possible.

Tracy W. Zents, director of Emergency Services who acted as the facilitator of the exercise stated, "This was the time to make mistakes. Correct them and be ready in a real situation."

According to Zents, the scenario was only known to a couple of individuals.

"We wanted the training of the sheriff's office and probation department to dictate their course of actions without knowing the shooter's motive or intended target," added Zents.

Most active shooter events happen for only a few minutes are generally unpredictable and evolve quickly. But the residual effects can last much longer.



Typically, the immediate deployment of law enforcement is required to stop the attack and mitigate harm to victims. Individuals must be prepared both mentally and physically to deal with a situation like this.

Chad Weaver, court administrator for Jefferson County said he was impressed on how well everything worked. "I'm very appreciative of the entire emergency services and law enforcement's efforts to collaborate so quickly for this unfortunate, but necessary exercise."

In terms of next steps, the team will review all of the notes, photographs, videos and evaluations to prepare an after-action report highlighting best practices and areas that need improvement. ▲

District judge launches 22nd annual ‘Drugs Kill Dreams’ campaign aimed at Armstrong County children

By Tony LaRussa

Reprinted with permission from the Pittsburgh Tribune Review.

When Ford City District Judge **J. Gary DeComo** launched a youth anti-drug campaign in 2000, he knew that helping kids make choices that lead them away from drug abuse would take more than a catchy slogan, a pep talk and handing out sports memorabilia. But it was a start.

“Those things are just my way of getting their attention and raising the level of drug prevention awareness,” said DeComo, who is kicking off his 22nd annual “Drugs Kill Dreams” initiative. “I’m not a prevention specialist, I’m a prevention advocate. I want to give the kids and the adults around them something to think about. Something to help them remember.”

When it began in 2000, the campaign was named after a poster made by a fourth grader at Lenape Elementary School. Today, DeComo said, reinforcing the anti-drug message is more important than ever because of the opioid crisis.

“Back in 2007, we were noticing that we were chasing kids for possession of a small amount of marijuana, but there wasn’t much attention being paid to the dangerous narcotics they could find right in the medicine cabinet,” DeComo said. “It took quite a while for the federal government to realize how big the opioid problem really was. And now we’re dealing with the consequences.”



Ford City District Judge J. Gary DeComo poses in front of a collection of sports memorabilia he has assembled to hand out to kids and youth organizations who sign a pledge to make choices that will help avoid drug abuse. The effort is part of his 22nd annual “Drugs Kill Dreams” campaign.

Between 2015 and 2017, Armstrong County experienced a drug-related death rate spike that was significantly higher than the state and national averages, according to an “OverdoseFreePA” study conducted by the University of Pittsburgh.

The study showed that in 2015, the overdose death rate in Armstrong County was 40.5 per 100,000 residents — compared to 27.1 for the state and 16.5 nationally.

In 2016, the county number rose to 62 per 100,000 residents, while the rates were 36.7 at the state level and 19.9 nationally. In 2017, the rate in the county was 59.4 per 100,000 residents, compared with rates of 44 across the state and 21.8 nationally.

The study found that fentanyl, heroin and anti-anxiety benzodiazepines were involved in 80% of accidental drug overdoses during that same time.

While the campaign officially started in 2000, DeComo began visiting local schoolchildren in 1994 to discuss the dangers of drugs. He takes his anti-drug campaign directly to children by visiting classes at schools throughout Armstrong County. The presentations include a request that students sign an anti-drug pledge.

Rewards are given in the form of sports memorabilia that the judge has assembled. Larger memorabilia items often are donated to local youth sports groups that sign the pledge so they can raffle them off to raise money.

“I’m always looking for small sports items like 8-by-10 photos of players the kids might enjoy having, and I try to get them autographed,” the magistrate said. “I have no interest in collecting sports memorabilia myself. But I know the kids like it, and it’s a great way to open the door to the important message I want to convey to them.” ▲

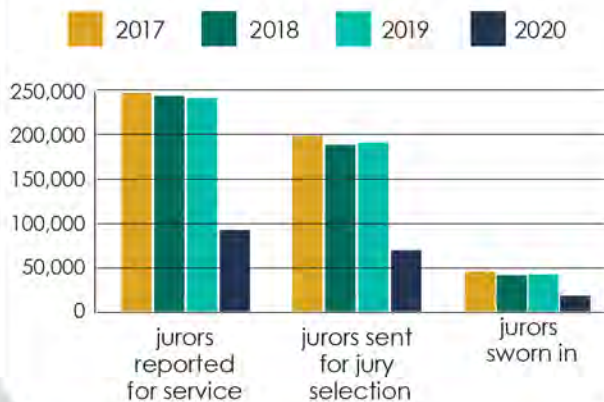
Jury Duty in Pennsylvania: What You Need to Know

The U.S. and Pennsylvania Constitutions guarantee one of the most fundamental rights of Americans – **the right to a trial by jury.**

When are juries used?

Juries are primarily used in Common Pleas Courts, known as trial courts.

Statewide data on criminal and civil jury duty over the past four years:



Juror eligibility requirements:

- Must be a U.S. citizen, 18 years of age or older and reside in county.
- Able to read and understand English.
- Be mentally and physically capable of rendering efficient jury service.
- Not have been convicted of a crime punishable by imprisonment for more than one year.

Differences in criminal, civil and investigating grand juries:

Criminal trial juries

- Juries in criminal cases are usually made up of 12 members, unless the parties agree to a smaller amount but no less than six members.



- Criminal trials are generally public, but jury deliberations are private.
- Criminal trial juries decide whether a defendant is guilty or not guilty and the verdict must be unanimous.



- In criminal cases, the standard of proof is **“beyond a reasonable doubt”** – placing the burden on the prosecutor to convince the jury of a defendant's guilt.

Civil trial juries

- Parties can agree to have a jury with less than 12 members in a civil trial.
- Civil trials are generally public, but jury deliberations are private.
- Civil juries decide whether a defendant is liable or not liable.
- In civil cases, the standard of proof is usually based on a **“preponderance of the evidence”** – requiring a finding that a party's evidence has the greater weight to tip a scale even slightly in their favor.



Commonwealth Court Reflects on Passing of Retired Judge Johnny J. Butler

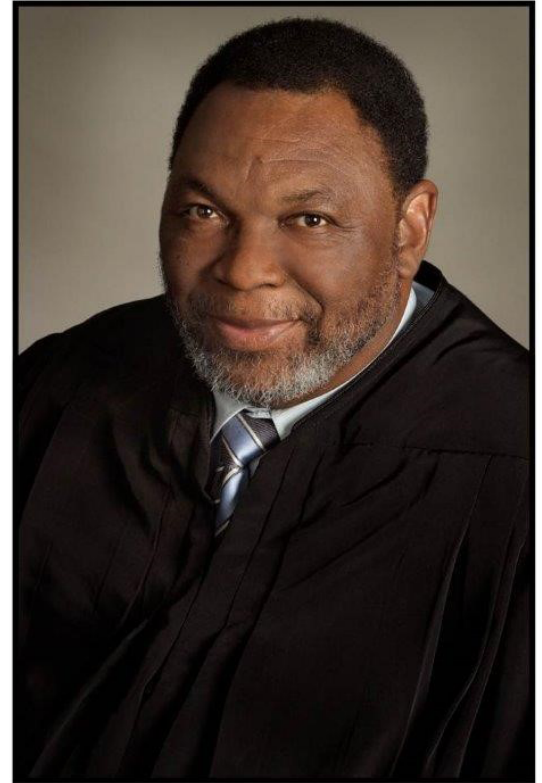
Following the recent passing of retired Judge Johnny J. Butler, Commonwealth Court President Judge **Renée Cohn Jubelirer** released the following statement on behalf of the Court:

“We are deeply saddened about the passing of our former colleague, Judge **Johnny J. Butler**. Judge Butler was a wonderful man who will be remembered for his intellect, fortitude and commitment to public service. Our sincerest condolences go out to Judge Butler’s family, friends and colleagues as they grieve this difficult loss.”

Judge Butler served on the Commonwealth Court from 2008 until 2011. Prior to joining the Court, he was appointed Secretary of Labor and Industry in 1995 by then Governor Tom Ridge, where he served until 2003.

A dedicated public servant, he held several roles at the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) including Associate Regional Attorney (1975-79), Philadelphia District Director (1979-95) and Acting General Counsel (1984-87).

Judge Butler also served as an adjunct professor at Howard and Temple Universities, on the Board of Directors for the Philadelphia African-American Museum, and as an assistant counsel at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund in the beginning of his career.



Judge Johnny J. Butler

BLUEPRINT FOR RACIAL JUSTICE OFFERS GUIDANCE, RESOURCES FOR COURTS

Reprinted with permission from the National Center for State Courts newsletter – @ the Center.



Courts across the country are taking steps to gain a better understanding of race as leaders work to identify and address inequities impacting racial justice.

Through the [Blueprint for Racial Justice](#), NCSC is bringing courts together to problem solve and share best practices and lessons learned to develop an array of resources that can help courts start or continue their racial justice journey.

Guided by a steering committee of chief justices, state court administrators, and NCSC leadership, more than 150 judicial branch leaders, court executives, and NCSC experts are developing tools to improve racial equality to ensure all court users, litigants, and community members are heard and respected by the justice system. A 2020 resolution from the Conference of Chief Justices and Conference of State Court Administrators charged leaders to examine systemic change in the system.

Last month, the group released “[Systemic Change Guiding Principles](#)” that outline seven principles to assist courts with examining the root causes of disparities and seeking reforms at the system level. These principles can be used to evaluate potential areas to address, propose policy reforms, or conduct analyses on proposed rule changes or legislation.

And earlier this month, State Court Organization published [judicial demographic](#) information on gender, race, and ethnicity.

Additionally, the project is creating opportunities for conversations about racial justice through webinars and a [Watch, Read, Listen](#) project that introduces literary works such as, “So You Want to Talk About Race,” to evoke thoughts, feelings and ideas about race.

Since last year, the Blueprint for Racial Justice has hosted [nine webinars](#) with topics ranging from guidance on creating your own racial justice blueprint and initiating courageous conversations about race to systemic issues related to pretrial release and financial sanctions. Today, a [new five-part series focusing on juries](#) begins at 1 p.m. ET.

Resources developed through the Blueprint for Racial Justice are available in NCSC’s [online Racial Justice Resource Center](#). Ongoing and future work includes a racial justice organizational assessment toolkit for courts, resources on topics such as data collection strategies and judicial mentorship and an internship portal. Financial support from NCSC and the State Justice Institute has made this work possible.

To learn more about the Blueprint for Racial Justice, contact [Edwin Bell](#), Director of Racial Justice, Equity and Inclusion, or project director [Jennifer Elek](#).