



News for Immediate Release

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PCCD Receives National Award for Outstanding Criminal Justice Initiative

Harrisburg – A special advisory committee within the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency has received a prestigious national award for its efforts to help individuals with mental health needs who are involved in the criminal justice system.

PCCD's Mental Health and Justice Advisory Committee received the National Criminal Justice Association Outstanding Criminal Justice Program award, which recognizes innovative and successful criminal justice programs that showcase promising practices to address critical crime-related issues in communities.

Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas Judge John Zottola, who chairs PCCD's Mental Health and Justice Advisory Committee, accepted the award earlier this month at the 2011 National Forum on Criminal Justice and Public Safety.

The Mental Health and Justice Advisory Committee provides guidance to counties in coordinating criminal justice and mental health activities, with the goal of reducing the number of persons with mental health, or co-occurring substance abuse needs, from entering or remaining in the criminal justice system, while also protecting public safety and the community.

The committee's work led to the creation of a Center of Excellence, or CoE, for the development and improvement of programs serving adults with mental illness involved in the criminal justice system. The CoE promotes evidence-based and promising practices and support for counties in the operation and sustainability of jail diversion and re-entry programs and acts as a clearinghouse for information and resources related to criminal justice, mental health and substance abuse.

"The creation of the Mental Health and Justice Advisory Committee and the Center of Excellence has afforded the opportunity for state and local cross-system collaboration," said PCCD Executive Director Linda Rosenberg. "This initiative has enhanced Pennsylvania's ability to successfully divert from incarceration and provide treatment to justice-involved individuals with mental illness."

The Mental Health and Justice Advisory Committee was established in 2009 with PCCD's Office of Criminal Justice System Improvements and the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare's Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.

The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency is the state's lead agency for criminal justice policy issues and is committed to providing essential support service to law enforcement agencies, responding to and supporting victims of crime and strengthening communities.

For more information, visit www.pccd.state.pa.us or call 717-705-0888.

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