

State Drug Court conference set for Aug. 19-21 in Biloxi

August 12, 2015

The eleventh annual Mississippi Association of Drug Court Professionals Conference will be held Aug. 19-21 at the Imperial Palace in Biloxi.

The conference will include presentations from mental health and drug treatment professionals, judges, court staff and law enforcement. Presentations will cover current drug abuse trends, prescription drugs, DUI's in drug court, drug treatment issues for adults and adolescents, addiction and mental illness, and ethics.

The conference begins at 1 p.m. Aug. 19 with a welcome and opening remarks from Hinds County Justice Court Judge Frank Sutton, president of MADCP; Biloxi Mayor Andrew Gillich; and U.S. District Judge Keith Starrett of Hattiesburg, who started the state's first drug court in 1999.

Jerri Avery, director of the Mississippi Department of Mental Health Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Services, will speak at 2:15 p.m. Dr. Avery will talk about accessing substance abuse services in the public mental health system. She will outline all options for treatment for individuals with substance use disorders, provide a full description of the service system, and discuss how to access services.

"The treatment system in Mississippi has the capacity to serve more than 500 people on any given day in community-based residential programs and numerous intensive outpatient programs for adults and adolescents. There is no reason for any individual in Mississippi desiring treatment and wanting to recover from addictions to go without treatment," she said.

Four concurrent breakout sessions starting at 3:30 p.m. Aug. 19 will cover drug trends in Mississippi, family and adult drug courts, emerging roles of peer support in drug courts, and drug court case management.

Synthetic drugs will be the opening topic Aug. 20 at 9 a.m. Robert Donovan, resident agent in charge of the Gulfport office of the Drug Enforcement Administration, will give a law enforcement perspective.

Retired Albuquerque, N.M., District Judge J. Michael Kavanaugh, senior director of the National Center for DWI Courts, is scheduled to speak at 10:15 a.m. and 2:45 p.m. Aug. 20. Judge Kavanaugh, who started one of the earliest DWI courts in 1997, travels nationwide to promote establishment of new DWI courts, raise awareness about the successful model, and provide training, technical assistance and research.

The Twelfth District Drug Court of Forrest and Perry counties operates the state's only separate program for alcohol offenders. The Eighth and Nineteenth Circuit Courts offer a drunken driving component within the drug courts. Most of the other drug courts across the state include some participants whose substance abuse problem is alcohol.

Repeat offenders are the focus of Judge Kavanaugh's model. "DWI courts are targeting the toughest and most dangerous group of DWI offenders," he said. The recidivism rate for traditional court programs dealing with alcohol-involved traffic offenders is 35 to 40 percent, he said. The DWI court model can reduce recidivism to 5 percent, he said. "That translates to fewer people dying or being involved in life-changing crashes."

Billy Saul, director of the Office of Drug Court Compliance, is scheduled to speak during the luncheon that will begin at 11:45 a.m. The compliance office provides training and assistance to drug courts to help them improve operations and implement best practices.

Dana Crenshaw, director of the Mississippi Board of Pharmacy Prescription Monitoring Program, will speak at 1:30 p.m. Aug. 20.

The Aug. 21 morning program includes sessions on effective treatment in case management, medication assisted treatment, juvenile programs, 12-Step programs and ethics. The conferences will conclude at 12:30 p.m.

A complete conference agenda is at this link: <http://www.cvent.com/events/2015-madcp-annual-training-conference/custom-17-d31b7604f7d94caaaa7e38169e1ae707.aspx>.

About 350 people, including judges, drug court staff, law enforcement, correctional officers and drug treatment providers, are expected to attend the MADCP conference, said State Drug Court Coordinator Joey Craft.

Mississippi's 40 drug courts graduated 736 people during the 2015 fiscal year that ended June 30. That includes 463 who graduated from the 22 felony adult drug courts, 73 who completed one of the three adult misdemeanor level programs, and 200 youths who completed one of the 12 juvenile drug courts. The state also has two family drug courts. About 3,300 people were enrolled in drug court programs statewide at the end of June.

Felony adult drug court participants paid \$1,265,367 in fines to the counties, and paid \$1,493,236 in participation fees during the 2015 fiscal year. Adult felony participants in the program gave birth to 77 drug free babies, and 104 parents regained custody or visitation rights with their children. Among adult participants, 843 were enrolled in college courses, 236 were in vocational-technical programs, and 64 earned a General Education Development (GED) certificate.

Statewide, adult participants were drug tested more than 135,000 times during the last fiscal year. Of those, about 4 percent tested positive for drugs while under the supervision of drug courts.

Drug Courts seek to rehabilitate drug-using offenders through drug treatment and intense supervision with frequent court appearances and random drug testing. Drug courts offer the incentive of a chance to remain out of jail and be employed and the sanction of a prison sentence if participants fail to remain drug-free and in compliance with all program requirements.

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