

State Drug Court conference set for Aug. 24-26 in Tupelo

August 22, 2016

The Mississippi Association of Drug Court Professionals Twelfth Annual Conference is scheduled for Aug. 24-26 at the BanCorpSouth Conference Center, 387 East Main Street in Tupelo.

Tupelo Mayor Jason Shelton, Circuit Judge Jim Pounds, MADCP President and Hinds County Justice Court Judge Frank Sutton, and Joe Grist of North Mississippi State Hospital will welcome participants to the conference at 1 p.m. Aug. 24. The first presentation will be a Hattiesburg father's story of his son's struggle with addiction that ended in his overdose death.

Conference topics will include, among others, the national opioid epidemic, juveniles and drugs, gangs, special needs of veterans, human trafficking, and best practices for drug courts. Participants will hear presentations from medical, mental health and drug treatment professionals as well as judges, court staff and law enforcement.

The first afternoon's program includes a 2:30 p.m. presentation about gang activity by Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics Director of Training Capt. Jimmie Nichols. Four concurrent sessions will start at 4 p.m. They include:

- Sandra Middleton of Natchez, executive director of the Center for Violence Prevention, will talk about human trafficking.
- Problem-solving court analyst Dian Gonyea and management analyst Dana Graham, both of the Michigan Supreme Court State Court Administrative Office, will conduct a training session on gathering and utilizing data in drug courts.
- Dr. Angela Robertson, associate director and research professor at the Social Science Research Center at Mississippi State University, will talk about the potential of juvenile drug courts. Dr. Robertson, a member of the Mississippi Commission on Children's Justice and previous member of the Juvenile Detention and Alternatives Task Force, has conducted research on behavioral health issues and interventions for juvenile and adult offenders for 22 years.
- Mississippi Supreme Court Justice Jim Kitchens of Crystal Springs will talk about judicial responsibility.

The Aug. 25 noon luncheon will include presentations by Veterans Administration justice outreach specialist David Germany and Billy Saul, director of the Office of Drug Court Compliance.

A 1:30 p.m. session on Aug. 25 will include discussion of prescription drug opiates by Dr. Kevin Freeman, assistant professor at University of Mississippi Medical Center. Dr. Freeman is a behavioral pharmacologist specializing in the study of drug abuse. One of Dr. Freeman's research projects is a study to develop novel abuse-deterrent formulations for prescription opioids.

The discussion of opioid prescription addiction will continue at 9 a.m. Aug. 26 with a presentation by Dr. Don Teater, medical advisor at the National Safety Council. Dr. Teater, who specializes in psychiatric services and opioid dependence treatment, advises the National Safety Council on advocacy initiatives to reduce deaths and injuries associated with prescription drug overdoses. Dr. Teater has practiced medicine in western North Carolina for 28 years.

The entire MADCP conference agenda is at this link: <http://www.cvent.com/events/2016-madcp-annual-training-conference/custom-17-7db025d7a4794a0689f3e70a703a4f5e.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.

Drug courts seek to rehabilitate drug-using offenders through drug treatment and intense supervision with frequent court appearances and drug testing. Mississippi currently has 42 drug courts. About 3,450 people are enrolled in drug courts statewide.