

State Drug Court conference set for Aug. 23-25 in Natchez

August 18, 2017

The Mississippi Association of Drug Court Professionals Thirteenth Annual Conference is scheduled for Aug. 23-25 at the Natchez Convention Center.

MADCP President Tamela Hardy will open the conference at 1 p.m. Aug. 23, and Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr., Natchez Mayor Darryl Grennell and Adams County Sheriff Travis Patten will welcome participants. A Fourth Circuit Drug Court participant will speak from a recovering addict's perspective.

Participants will hear presentations from medical, mental health and drug treatment professionals as well as judges and law enforcement during the three-day conference. The opening session at 2 p.m. will feature a presentation about standards and best practices by Carolyn Hardin, chief of training and research at the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. Hardin oversees daily operations for NADCP's National Drug Court Institute, National Center for DWI Courts, and Justice for Vets.

Concurrent presentations beginning at 3:30 p.m. will include cultural diversity, DUI cases involving substances other than alcohol, new guidelines for juvenile drug treatment courts, and stress management.

At 9 a.m. Thursday, Aug. 24, David Echevarria, Ph.D., will talk about the neuroscience of drug addiction and treatment. Dr. Echevarria is Brain and Behavior Director of Training and Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Southern Mississippi.

At 10:30 a.m. Thursday, former Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics Capt. Jeff Killion will talk about the opioid epidemic in Mississippi. Three other concurrent sessions will address the work of the Mississippi Forensics Lab, more about guidelines for juvenile drug treatment courts, and burnout.

A nationally recognized expert on family drug courts will speak at 1:45 p.m. and 3:15 p.m. Thursday. Phil Breitenbucher directs the National Family Drug Court Training and Technical Assistance Program and the Statewide System Reform Program supported by the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Mississippi has three Family Drug Courts in Adams, Rankin and Harrison counties. Adams County started the state's first Family Drug Court in 2010 under the direction of then-County and Youth Court Judge John Hudson.

At 3:15 p.m. Thursday, Thomas Washington, director of the Investigative Division for the Board of Medical Licensure, will talk about investigating and prosecuting pharmaceutical drug diversion. Concurrent 3:15 p.m. sessions also will include discussions of co-occurring disorders and ethics.

Medication assisted treatment of drug addiction will be discussed at 9 a.m. Friday, Aug. 25. Dr. Gary Carr is a physician and addiction medicine consultant who practices at several addiction treatment facilities.

The MADCP Conference is co-sponsored by MADCP and the State Drug Court Advisory Committee.

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.

Mississippi currently has 43 drug courts. There are 22 adult felony programs, 15 juvenile programs, three misdemeanor programs and three family courts. More than 3,600 people are enrolled in drug courts statewide.