



## Supreme Court of Illinois

August 26, 2020

### **MENTAL HEALTH SUMMIT SERIES TO BE HELD IN ILLINOIS**

The Illinois Supreme Court, in cooperation with the State Justice Institute (SJI) and the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), has announced it will hold a Virtual Summit Series (Summit) this fall. This Summit, a mixture of plenary sessions and interactive panel presentations, is part of the National Judicial Task Force initiative to examine how to improve state courts and community response to mental illness.

The Summit will be a statewide, multi-disciplinary series of five sessions held virtually, from 3:00-5:00 p.m. each Tuesday beginning on September 29, 2020, and continuing through October 27, 2020.

“Illinois’ problem-solving courts have helped thousands of individuals receive the help they need to get their lives back on track,” Illinois Supreme Court Chief Justice Anne M. Burke said. “Hosting this Summit and convening key stakeholders to make changes to keep individuals with mental illness out of the justice system or prevent them from penetrating further, will keep the Illinois Courts at the forefront of mental health best practices.”

The five sessions will include such noted speakers as former U.S. Representative Patrick Kennedy, Judge Steven Leifman of Miami-Dade, Florida, and psychiatrists Dr. Margie Balfour (Arizona), Dr. Debra Pinals (Michigan) and Dr. Sarah Vinson (Georgia).

The topics covered will be:

**September 29<sup>th</sup>** – *21<sup>st</sup>-Century Crisis Systems: Strategies for Mental Health and Law Enforcement Collaboration to Prevent Justice Involvement*

**October 6<sup>th</sup>** - *Mental Health Diversions from the Justice System through Leadership, Collaboration, and Building Momentum; Lessons Learned from the Pandemic*

**October 13<sup>th</sup>** - *Voices of Lived Experience: Informing Change*

**October 20<sup>th</sup>** - *How Mental Illness and Trauma Affect Quality of Life*

**October 27<sup>th</sup>** – *Illinois’ Response: Bringing the Community Together in One Voice and Common Mission*

“This Series presents a unique opportunity to become informed on how to take the operation of Illinois’ problem-solving courts to an unparalleled level,” said Appellate Justice Kathryn Zenoff, a member of the Illinois Supreme Court’s Mental Health Task Force. “It also presents an opportunity, never before available, to collaborate both with community stakeholders and our

partners in the legislative and executive branches of Illinois government to develop and implement effective and lasting change not only benefitting those with behavioral health disorders, but improving the quality of life of all citizens within our state.”

The goal of the Summit is to provide a forum where representatives from the judicial, executive, and legislative branches, along with key stakeholders from the behavioral health system, such as providers, advocates, and individuals with lived experience, can come together to discuss effective practices already in existence and collaborate to create new paths for the early diagnosis and treatment of individuals suffering from mental health and substance use issues. The Summit is also intended to identify strategies and develop initiatives leading to treatment, rather than jail, for individuals who suffer from behavioral health disorders.

The Illinois Supreme Court’s Mental Health Task Force, comprised of behavioral health and justice system stakeholders throughout the state, is charged with creating the agenda for the Summit and leading implementation of new initiatives resulting from the Summit.

The NCSC, which will coordinate the Summit, is the preeminent judicial reform organization in the United States. Its National Judicial Task Force was established this year to assist state courts in their efforts to more effectively respond to the needs of court-involved individuals with serious mental illness.

The SJI, which provides funding for the Summit, was established by federal law in 1984 to award grants to improve the quality of justice in state courts, and foster innovative, efficient solutions to common issues faced by all courts.

—30—

**(FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: Chris Bonjean, Communications Director to the Illinois Supreme Court at 312.793.2323 or [cbonjean@illinoiscourts.gov](mailto:cbonjean@illinoiscourts.gov).)**