

CNO REVIEW

June 2015



TREATING ADDICTION

THE PATH TO RECOVERY SOMETIMES BEGINS
IN FRONT OF THE BENCH (SEE STORY, PAGE 6).



IMAGES: THINKSTOCK

Let's Treat it TOGETHER

THE PATH TO RECOVERY SOMETIMES BEGINS IN FRONT OF THE BENCH

Standing before a judge, hearing an order to remove children from the home and place them in foster care may be the lowest point in life for some Ohio parents. And for those who are there because of a drug addiction, it may also be the most important step to getting on the path to the lives with their children that they dream about.

Ohio, much like the rest of the nation, faces a growing problem with opiate addiction, and it is not only sending abusers to their graves, it's also ripping apart families. State policy makers are combating both these issues aggressively and family drug courts are a key ingredient to the solution.

Improving the effectiveness of family drug court and breaking down the barriers that limit the ability of families who need the direction and services courts provide is the subject of the second Ohio judicial symposium focused on opiate addiction. Taking place on June 23 in Columbus, the program is titled, "Ohio 2015 Judicial Symposium on Addiction and Child Welfare."

Opiates are the powerful painkilling drugs whose rise in prominence came with increased use and abuse of prescription painkillers, such as oxycodone, hydrocodone and morphine. As the state cracked down on prescription pill mills and the medical profession worked harder to deter abuse, heroin, another form of opiate, regained popularity as the pain killer of choice as its availability increased and its low price attracted users.

Its impact has been striking. The number of Ohioans treated for opiate addiction jumped from around 5,800 in 2002 to nearly 25,000 in 2012. And new figures released in May by the Ohio Department of Health show 2,110 deaths in 2013 were from unintentional drug overdoses with opiates accounting for nearly three-quarters of the overdoses that year. Since 2007, more Ohioans have died each year from drug overdoses than from car accidents.

Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice **Maureen O'Connor** said while courts, law enforcement, and treatment professionals are addressing the issue, the problem is greater than these organizations can address on their own.

"This is a community problem. Our courts, law enforcement, and treatment communities across the state are forming strategies to work together on this problem," she said. "We are

making progress. However, we need the entire community to help us. Leaders of the business community, faith community, educators, medical profession, and many others need to get involved.”

Chief Justice O’Connor’s comments are part of a 20-minute video that features some of the state’s leading experts explaining how addiction alters the brain and what drugs are used to treat opiate addiction. The video will be distributed to judges statewide with the hope that they will show it when speaking before civic groups to discuss Ohio’s opiate addiction problem.

Ohio currently has 16 family drug courts certified by the Supreme Court. Family court is designed for parents that have a significant substance abuse problem and are involved in the judicial system by way of an abuse, neglect, or dependency matter. The goal of the courts is to focus on treatment and rehabilitation, and reunification of the family.

Drug abuse issues among those who have contact with Ohio’s child protective services isn’t a minor issue. More than 42 percent of parents in contact with children’s services have identified substance abuse issues, according to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS).

The symposium is hosted through the partnership of the Supreme Court’s Specialized Docket and Children & Families sections, the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, ODJFS, and the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities.

Ohio is one of five states to receive a Family Drug Court Statewide System Reform Program grant from the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to help fund statewide systematic reform for family drug courts.

“The increase in opiate abuse is taking a toll on Ohio’s

families. Our family drug courts can provide families stability and increase well-being through court-monitored treatment. We will use this grant to identify the barriers that limit families’ ability to access the assistance drug courts provide. Removing these barriers is fundamental to participation and success,” Chief Justice O’Connor said.

Ohio Supreme Court Specialized Dockets Program Manager **Orman Hall** managed treatment programs for more than 25 years, and now manages the Supreme Court program that assists drug courts.

“The emphasis for this year’s opiate summit is working on policy development for parents who are struggling with opiate addiction and have a very real possibility of losing their children because of their inability to deal with their addiction problems,” Hall said.

Last June, nearly 900 participants representing 83 counties took part in the first Ohio Judicial Symposium on Opiate Addiction. Teams of five or six professionals whose work is impacted by addiction, the court system, and the child welfare system from each of the counties convened and heard from state leaders and experts who underlined the importance of local efforts to combat opiate and heroin addiction. They left with a mandate to develop plans, and teams continue to meet and implement plans to address the crisis in their communities.

At the upcoming event, juvenile judges will be invited to lead teams. Team members may include: judges, magistrates, child welfare directors, leaders of local alcohol, drug addiction and mental health boards, treatment providers, Guardians ad Litem, volunteer court advocates for children, attorneys representing parents, or other local representatives they feel can help. During the event, judicial, child welfare, and behavioral health leaders will address the teams. And

they will hear from some successful participants from Ohio programs.

One strong advocate for the drug court approach is Fairfield Municipal Judge **Joyce A. Campbell**. Judge Campbell said she and her municipal court colleagues are on the front line of the drug addiction war, and they have a chance to break through with an abuser before their charges lead to more serious crimes.

“And when you finally get them in the appropriate treatment, on the appropriate medication with the support system they need, and they come back and they are working a job, or maybe back in school, and they have reunited with their family, there is no better feeling in the world,” she said.



JUDICIAL SYMPOSIUM on Addiction & Child Welfare

WHEN: June 23, 2015

WHERE: Columbus, Ohio

The symposium will examine issues surrounding addiction as they relate to parents and caretakers involved in child welfare cases. Teams of juvenile judges, child welfare, behavioral health, and judicial professionals, whose work directly impacts families who come to the attention of courts because of substance abuse, will gather to hear from state and national experts and discuss how to apply what they learn at the local level. Participants will identify core local needs and limitations, steps they can take to support their community partners’ work, and resolve conflicting demands.

PARTNERS

The Supreme Court of Ohio

Ohio Association of Behavioral Health Authorities

Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services