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INNOVATIVE SPECIALTY COURTS *QUARTERLY*

QUARTERLY NEWS, GRANT SOURCES, AND TRAINING EVENTS

The Innovative Specialty Courts Committee exchanges ideas, discusses issues and recommends policies related to the operation and administration of Ohio courts with specialty dockets (mental health courts, drug courts, re-entry courts, etc.). The Innovative Specialty Courts Committee is working to identify additional resources available to these courts and to develop a procedural framework in order to facilitate the continued operation of these dockets.

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WELCOME

Welcome to the Sixteenth Edition of the Innovative Specialty Courts Newsletter. The purpose of the newsletter is to provide articles, training opportunities and resources and to foster collaboration among our community of specialized docket judges.

Justice with Compassion: Reducing Stigma for Families Affected by Substance Use Disorder

by: Dean Dauphinais, Face Addiction Now*

For judges and court professionals, cases involving substance use disorder are a familiar part of the docket. For the families sitting quietly in the courtroom, however, these moments often represent one of the most difficult days of their lives.

A parent waits anxiously as a son's case is called. A spouse wonders whether today's hearing will be another missed opportunity for treatment. A grandparent has unexpectedly become the primary caregiver for young grandchildren while trying to make sense of circumstances they never imagined facing. Each family arrives with a unique story, but many share the same emotions: fear, exhaustion, guilt, uncertainty, and hope.

> *When court professionals approach people affected by substance use disorder with dignity, respect, and understanding, they not only reinforce confidence in the judicial process but also help reduce the stigma that too often stands in the way of recovery.*

Justice with Compassion: Reducing Stigma for Families Affected by Substance Use Disorder (cont.)

by: Dean Dauphinais, Face Addiction Now

The justice system is responsible for upholding the law, protecting the public, and ensuring accountability. Yet every interaction within that system also presents an opportunity to influence how individuals and families experience justice. When court professionals approach people affected by substance use disorder with dignity, respect, and understanding, they not only reinforce confidence in the judicial process but also help reduce the stigma that too often stands in the way of recovery.

Substance use disorder (SUD) is widely recognized as a chronic, treatable medical condition. Despite decades of scientific advancement, stigma surrounding addiction remains deeply rooted in society. Although much attention has rightly focused on reducing stigma toward individuals living with SUD, family members frequently experience a parallel form of stigma that is less visible but equally damaging.

Parents quietly wonder whether others believe they failed their child. Spouses are criticized either for staying in the relationship or for leaving it. Siblings often carry feelings of embarrassment, anger, or responsibility they rarely discuss. Grandparents unexpectedly find themselves raising children again while grieving the struggles of their own adult sons or daughters.

Long before they ever enter a courtroom, many families have already become isolated. They may hesitate to tell friends what is happening, avoid asking for help, or withdraw from social connections because they fear judgment or blame. Unlike many other chronic illnesses, substance use disorder is still too often viewed through a moral lens rather than a medical one. As a result, families frequently internalize criticism, believing they somehow caused—or could have prevented—the addiction.

In reality, substance use disorder develops through a complex interaction of biological, psychological, environmental, and social factors. Families do not create addiction through a lack of love or effort. More often, they spend years trying to help someone they love while navigating an illness that affects every member of the household.

For many families, involvement with the justice system is not something they ever anticipated. An arrest, probation violation, or court appearance often follows years of escalating substance use, repeated attempts at treatment, financial hardship, fractured relationships, and countless sleepless nights. By the time a case reaches the courtroom, many family members are emotionally exhausted.

Court professionals understandably focus on the legal issues before them. Yet it is worth remembering that, for the family sitting in the gallery, this is not simply another case on the docket. It is a son, daughter, spouse, sibling, or parent whom they love.

Recognizing that reality does not diminish accountability. Instead, it reminds us that every legal proceeding unfolds within a larger human story.

One of the most persistent misconceptions surrounding substance use disorder is that compassion somehow requires lowering expectations or excusing unlawful behavior. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Accountability remains an essential component of both justice and recovery. Individuals must answer for their actions, victims deserve justice, and communities deserve to be protected. At the same time, decades of



research have demonstrated that substance use disorder responds best to approaches that combine accountability with opportunities for treatment, recovery support, and long-term engagement.

Families often understand this balance better than anyone. Most parents do not come to court hoping consequences will disappear. Most spouses are not asking the court to ignore repeated harmful behavior. Many have learned through painful experience that shielding a loved one from every consequence rarely leads to lasting change.

What they hope for instead is fairness. They hope that someone will recognize both the seriousness of the offense and the possibility that the individual standing before the court can recover.

Justice and compassion are not competing values. They are complementary ones.

Not every courtroom interaction is dramatic. In fact, the smallest moments often leave the strongest impressions.

A clerk who patiently explains the next step to a confused parent.

A probation officer who answers questions without judgment.

A bailiff who recognizes that family members are visibly overwhelmed.

A judge who takes a moment to explain the reasoning behind a difficult decision.

These actions require little additional time, yet they communicate something powerful: every person in the courtroom deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. Simple actions—using person-first language, explaining court procedures in plain language, acknowledging the stress families may be experiencing, and connecting individuals to treatment or recovery resources when appropriate—can help reduce stigma while reinforcing the integrity of the judicial process.

Research on procedural justice has consistently shown that people are more likely to view legal proceedings as fair—and are more likely to comply with court orders—when they believe they have been treated respectfully, listened to, and given a meaningful opportunity to be heard. Even when the outcome is not what they hoped for, respectful treatment strengthens confidence in the justice system.

Families experience these interactions as well. Long after the legal details fade, they often remember how they were treated during one of the most difficult experiences of their lives.

Language is another powerful tool for reducing stigma.

The words professionals choose influence how people think about illness, responsibility, and the possibility of recovery. Terms such as addict, drug abuser, or junkie define people by a condition rather than recognizing their humanity. Person-first language places the individual before the diagnosis by referring to a person with substance use disorder or a person in recovery. Likewise, describing someone as having a positive drug test rather than a dirty drug test removes unnecessary moral judgment from clinical information.

These may seem like subtle differences, but research has shown that language influences attitudes toward individuals with substance use disorder, including perceptions about blame, punishment, and treatment. Families notice these distinctions. Respectful language reassures them that their loved one is being seen as a person—not merely as a case number or a diagnosis.

Substance use disorder rarely affects just one person. It changes family relationships, finances, emotional well-being, and the lives of children, parents, spouses, grandparents, and siblings. Recovery also extends

beyond the individual. When one person begins to heal, families begin to heal alongside them. Trust is rebuilt one conversation at a time. Children regain stability. Parents begin sleeping through the night again. Hope slowly returns.

The justice system cannot solve every challenge associated with substance use disorder, nor should it be expected to do so. But it occupies a uniquely important position within many recovery journeys. For some individuals and families, the courtroom becomes the place where accountability and opportunity intersect. It may be the first place where someone encourages treatment, reinforces hope, or simply treats a struggling family with compassion during a time of profound uncertainty.

Recovery often begins with a single moment—one conversation, one opportunity, one person who chooses to see potential instead of failure. Courts cannot create recovery on their own, but they can create an environment in which recovery remains possible.

Every interaction with a defendant or a family member sends a message. It can reinforce shame and isolation, or it can communicate dignity, fairness, and hope. Those messages matter. Families frequently remember not only what the court decided, but how they were treated while navigating one of the most difficult experiences of their lives.

Judges and court professionals are entrusted with administering justice, but they also have the opportunity to demonstrate something equally enduring: humanity. By recognizing the impact of stigma, choosing respectful language, and approaching every person with professionalism, compassion, and respect, the judiciary strengthens public confidence in the courts while helping create conditions where accountability and recovery can coexist.

Behind every case file is a family. And behind every family is the possibility of healing.

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*****Face Addiction Now*** *works to prevent drug use before it starts, reduce overdose fatalities, and connect individuals with treatment options that lead to long-term recovery. Through a range of no-cost programs, educational resources, and support services, FAN offers consistent guidance from early intervention through sustained recovery. We provide trusted information and practical tools to help individuals and families find stability, while shifting public understanding of substance use through trained professionals with real-world experience and solutions.*

RECAP

ALL RISE





2026 ALL RISE CONFERENCE in NASHVILLE, TENNESEE



BURNOUT IS NOT WEAKNESS

by: Nina Corbut, Ohio Lawyers Assistance Program, Dir. of Communications & Outreach



Most judges are accustomed to setting aside their own needs to meet the demands of their role. The docket is full, and people are depending on you to stay focused and steady regardless of what kind of day you are having. Over time, many judges become exceptionally good at functioning while tired, stressed or mentally overloaded.

That ability is often viewed as part of being professional. The problem is that burnout often hides behind competence. When judges continue showing up, staying productive, and meeting the demands of the role, it can be difficult to recognize when exhaustion has become something more than a busy season.

The problem is that burnout rarely announces itself in obvious ways. It does not usually begin with a breakdown or a moment where everything suddenly stops working. More often, it develops gradually and quietly, which makes it easy to normalize.

A judge once described it this way to OLAP:

"I thought I was just tired. Then I realized I hadn't actually felt rested in years."

She was still handling her docket. She was prepared, productive and respected. From the outside, nothing looked wrong. Internally, though, the work had started to feel different. The energy it took to stay engaged kept increasing, while the sense of satisfaction and connection to the work kept decreasing.

She had spent so long pushing through exhaustion that she stopped recognizing it as exhaustion.

That experience is more common than many judges realize.

Burnout Often Hides Behind Professionalism

The legal profession tends to reward endurance. Judges are expected to remain composed, decisive and reliable even under significant pressure. Most judges meet those expectations every day.

Because of that, burnout can hide behind high functioning.

You continue doing the work. You meet deadlines. You prepare thoroughly. Court runs smoothly. At the same time, though, smaller changes begin to appear beneath the surface.

You may notice that patience becomes harder to access. It may take more effort to focus or to stay emotionally present throughout the day. Things that once felt manageable begin to feel draining. Even time away from work may not feel restorative anymore.

Many judges assume these feelings are simply part of the role or a reflection of getting older, staying busy or having a demanding schedule, but sometimes they are signs that your mind and body have been under strain for too long without enough recovery.

Burnout Does Not Mean You Are Weak

One of the reasons judges hesitate to acknowledge burnout is because it can feel like an admission that they are no longer handling the work well, but burnout is not weakness. It is often the result of sustained responsibility without enough space to recover from it.

Judges routinely absorb conflict, emotion, urgency and pressure throughout the day. Much of that happens internally. There is rarely time to pause and process one matter before moving directly into the next, and, over

BURNOUT IS NOT WEAKNESS (cont.)

by: Nina Corbut, Ohio Lawyers Assistance Program, Dir. of Communications & Outreach

time, that constant output has an effect.

No one would expect a person to function indefinitely without sleep or without breaks. Mental and emotional exhaustion work similarly. Eventually, the system begins signaling that it needs attention.

It is important to be aware of those signals early.

What Burnout Can Look Like

Burnout does not always look dramatic. Sometimes it looks like feeling detached from work that once felt meaningful. Sometimes it looks like irritability, difficulty concentrating or feeling mentally exhausted before the day even begins.

For some judges, it shows up physically through headaches, sleep disruption or constant fatigue.

Others notice changes outside of work. They become less engaged with family, less interested in hobbies or more emotionally withdrawn because so much energy is being spent simply getting through the workday.

Because these changes tend to happen gradually, many people adjust to them without fully realizing how much has shifted.

Why Paying Attention Matters

When exhaustion becomes chronic, it becomes harder to think clearly, stay patient and feel fully present. The work still gets done, but it often takes more effort than it used to.

Judges are accustomed to carrying responsibility, but carrying it while depleted can slowly affect both personal well-being and the overall experience of the role. That is why paying attention early matters. Not because something is "wrong," but because burnout rarely improves through endurance alone.

Small Adjustments Can Make a Difference

Many judges assume addressing burnout would require major changes or stepping away from work entirely, but it usually starts much smaller than that.

For some judges, it means setting clearer boundaries between court and home life. For others, it means rebuilding routines that allow for actual recovery instead of simply collapsing at the end of the day.

Sometimes it involves reconnecting with things outside the profession that restore energy and perspective. Exercise, hobbies, friendships, faith communities or time away from screens can all create moments where the mind is no longer operating in constant response mode.

It can also help to talk openly with someone who understands the profession. Many judges who contact the Judicial Advisory Group or OLAP say the same thing afterward. They did not realize how long they had been carrying everything alone.

Independence and Support Can Coexist

Judges are expected to be independent, and that part of the role is not going to change, but independence does not mean ignoring signs of exhaustion or convincing yourself that you should be able to handle unlimited stress without support.

Burnout is not weakness. In many cases, it is a predictable response to years of sustained pressure, responsibility and emotional output.

Paying attention to it early is one of the healthiest things a judge can do for both personal well-being and long-term effectiveness on the bench.

JAG/OLAP provides confidential support for judges who want a place to talk through stress, burnout or the changing experience of the work.

BURNOUT IS NOT WEAKNESS (cont.)

by: Nina Corbut, Ohio Lawyers Assistance Program, Dir. of Communications & Outreach

Sometimes the most important step is recognizing that exhaustion should not have to become your normal.

A Resource Created by Judges, for Judges

The Ohio Lawyers Assistance Program's Judicial Advisory Group (JAG) is made up of judges from across Ohio who help guide OLAP's efforts to support members of the judiciary. JAG was created by judges who recognize the unique challenges of judicial service and the importance of ensuring that judges know where to turn for confidential support.

If this article resonated with you, or if you would like to learn more about resources available specifically for judges, JAG and OLAP are here to help. Conversations are confidential and designed to support judges in maintaining both personal well-being and professional effectiveness.

To learn more or speak with someone at JAG/OLAP:

Phone: 800-348-4343
Email: bendslow@ohiolap.org
Website: http://www.ohiolap.org/judges/

You do not need to be in crisis to reach out. Many judges contact JAG or OLAP simply because they want a place to talk through the challenges of the role with someone who understands the profession.



THE EDITORS WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!! PLEASE SUBMIT AN ARTICLE WITH PICTURES VIA EMAIL TO JUDGE HUFFMAN OR JUDGE PRATT (CONTACTS CAN BE FOUND ON THE FRONT PAGE OF THIS NEWSLETTER) SO WE MAY HIGHLIGHT YOUR SPECIALTY COURT IN A FUTURE NEWSLETTER.



TRAINING RESOURCES FOR SPECIALIZED DOCKETS

by: The Supreme Court of Ohio, Specialized Docket Section, Office of Court Services

Ohio Specialized Docket Standard 11 (Sup.R. 7.30) requires dockets to "assure continuing interdisciplinary education of advisory committee members, treatment team members, and personnel to promote effective specialized docket planning, implementation, and operations." In addition, judges serving specialized dockets are required to complete six hours of docket-related education every three-year certification period (Sup.R. 7.08). Any of the training below satisfies this requirement.

Specialized docket practitioners have access to numerous free, high-quality professional development opportunities that support effective docket operations and continuous improvement.

The Supreme Court of Ohio Specialized Dockets Section offers the free annual Specialized Dockets Conference (October 14 at the Ohio Union), technical assistance, and other training opportunities. For example, the Section partnered with NPC Research in the summer of 2026 to offer a webinar series. The webinars were recorded and will remain available through the end of 2026. Teams can access the videos on the Supreme Court of Ohio's Specialized Dockets page under Trainings and Events. Recorded webinars include:

- Have You Done Everything You Could to Avoid Termination?
- Evaluation 101 for Non-Researcher Team Members: What to Collect and How to Use It for Self-Review
- Where Did All My Participants Go? How to Increase Enrollment and Retention in Your Treatment Court
- Don't Just Wing It: Combining Clinical and Supervision Case Plans to Improve Participant Outcomes
- Incentives, Sanctions, and Service Adjustments: The Practical Application of the Science of Behavior Change, Parts 1 and 2
- Romeo and Juliet: What Do We Do When Participants Choose Someone We Think They Shouldn't?

The Supreme Court of Ohio Judicial College offers continuing legal and professional education for judges, magistrates, and court personnel. Most courses are free of charge. Browse the Judicial College course calendar to view courses and register.

Case Western Reserve University's Center for Evidence-Based Practices holds regularly scheduled webinars on a variety of substance use disorder-related topics relevant to specialized dockets. Visit their Free SUD COE Events page to browse upcoming topics and register for live webinars.

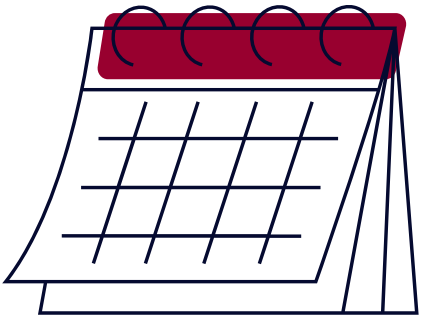
All Rise's E-Learning Center includes on-demand online courses and webinars that can be accessed at any time. Online programming covers foundational instruction on best practices and essential components of specialized dockets as well as more specialized content, such as incorporating supervision strategies to enhance docket outcomes.

Other organizations offer webinars and other educational opportunities throughout the year. Consider joining the following listservs to be notified when new opportunities come up. If you don't see the sign-up form on the pages below, scroll to the bottom.

- Ohio Department of Behavioral Health
- All Rise
- Stepping Up Ohio Newsletters
- Addiction Policy Forum
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Continuing education matters. Whether you are new to specialized dockets or an experienced practitioner, make education for yourself and your team a priority. While the rules require it, continuing education is also how your docket gets better. If you share this article with your team, ask them to bring back one thing the team can put into practice.

SAVE THE DATE



All Rise Treatment Court Institute 2027 Practitioner Training

at the Sheraton Oklahoma City Downtown | 1 N Broadway Street, Oklahoma City, OK

Registration is open in October.

Judges | March 16-19 2027

Coordinators | May 18-21, 2027

Defense Attorneys | September 14-17, 2027

The 2nd Annual Ohio Impaired Driving Symposium -2026

Embassy Suites - Columbus Airport, 2886 Airport Drive, Columbus, Ohio, on October 22, 2026.

Specialized Docket Roundtables

Coordinators | November 13, 2026 12p.m.-1p.m.

Veteran Mentors | October 7, 2026

Specialized Docket Managers | October 20, 2026 12p.m.-1p.m.

Lean Forward Veterans Summit

Villa Milano Banquet & Conference Center in Columbus, Ohio, on November 19, 2026.

All Rise RISE27 Conference

2027 ALL RISE will be held in National Harbor - Baltimore, MD, on July 19-22, 2027.

The 2026 Ohio Specialized Docket Conference | October 14, 2026

at the Ohio State University | The Ohio Union at 1739 North High Street, Columbus, Ohio

Registration is now open. For more information see the link here. https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/courts/services-to-courts/specialized-docket-section/specialized-dockets-conference/2026/



Lean Forward VeteransSummit2026

Healing Through Helping

Veterans Summit 2026

November 19, 2026

Villa Milano Banquet & Conference Center

1630 Schrock Road
Columbus, Ohio 43229

Registration

Comingthis Fall

Questions? Contact:

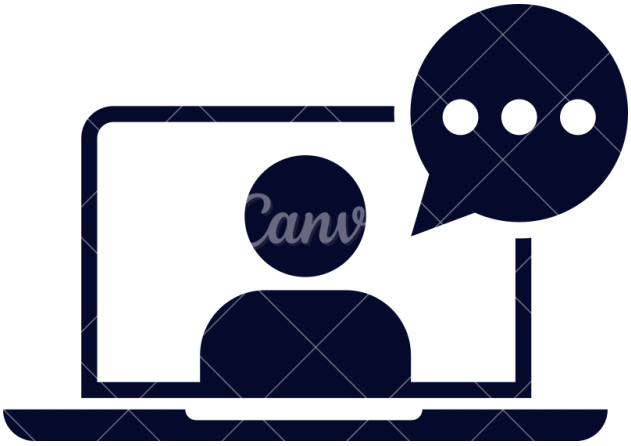
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Sponsored by:

Who should attend:

- County VeteransServiceOfficers
- County Commissioners
- Judicial Officers, Court Staff, and Probation Officers
- Law Enforcement Officers
- Local Mental Health Boards
- Behavioral Health Treatment Providers
- Healthcare Professionals
- Non-Profit Organizations
- Area Agencies on Aging
- Local Veterans Associations
- Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists
- Legal Aid Organizations

VIRTUAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES



ALL RISE E-LEARNING CENTER

https://allrise.org/trainings/e-learning/

SAMHSA'S PRACTITONER TRAINING

SAMHSA's practitioner training offers tools, training, and technical assistance to practitioners in the fields of mental health and substance use disorders.
https://www.samhsa.gov/resource-search/tta

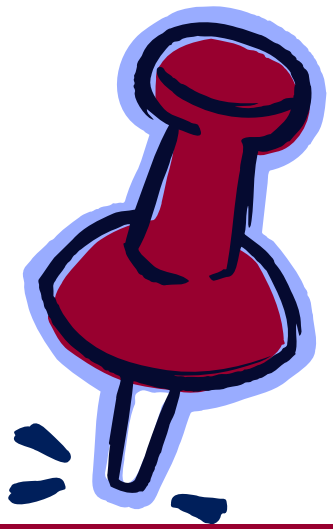
SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL RECOVERY MONTH!!
2026 SAMHSA HAS DEVELOPED A TOOLKIT

https://us.list-manage.com/18xkjhveoh1?e=3b79edfb56&c2id=2069ceecd9216a04f947dfe9be011248

IMPAIRED DRIVING PREVENTION MONTH TOOLKIT FOR TREATMENT COURTS

https://allrise.org/news/impaired-driving-prevention-month-toolkit-2/





GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

ODMHAS – SD Subsidy Project Funding
Link: Specialized Dockets | Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (ohio.gov)
Note: Cover payroll costs for specialized docket staff members or for clinical services provided by OhioMHAS certified addiction and/or mental health providers, medication assisted treatment (MAT) medications, urinalysis and recovery supports. Must be in the process of certification or certified by SCO.

ATP (Addiction Treatment Program) Funds
Link: Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (ohio.gov)
Note: Contact your local ADAMH board for what is available to your court program participants.

SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)
Link: Grants and Grantees | SAMHSA
Note: Search grants by state and type to see past funded awards. Deadlines vary.

NDRC (National Drug Court Resource Center) (For Adult, Veteran, Family & Juvenile Treatment Courts)
Link: Grant Solicitations - National Drug Court Resource Center (ndcrc.org)
Note: Lists solicitations from various sources.

Grants.gov
Link: Home | GRANTS.GOV
Note: Search for local/private funding, state and national funding opportunities. Deadlines vary.

State Justice Institute
Link: State Justice Institute (sji.gov)
Note: Application deadlines are: November 1; February 1; May 1; and August 1, and correspond with the federal fiscal year quarters.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation
Link: Grant Information & FAQs - The Annie E. Casey Foundation (aecf.org)
Note: Funding opportunities for juvenile justice. Rolling deadlines.

BJA FY26 Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use, Site-based Program(COSSUP)
Funding to support state and local governments to build responses to overdoses & illicit drug use. Deadline September 24, 2026 and October 1, 2026 - two step submission process

Grant and Funding Webinars:
Funding Webinars | Bureau of Justice Assistance (ojp.gov)
Training Events, Videos, and Reference Materials for Applicants and Grantees | SAMHSA
Grant Writing Basics – Grants.gov Community Blog (wordpress.com)

