

FISCAL YEARS  
2023 & 2024

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

---

**TASK**  **FORCE**  
on Criminal Justice and Mental Illness

RETIRED JUSTICE EVELYN LUNDBERG STRATTON,  
TASK FORCE CO-CHAIR

---

Sept. 10, 2024



**DAVE YOST**  
OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL



The Attorney General's Office  
protects Ohio and its families.

Our actions are driven by their interests,  
guided by the rule of law  
and the relentless pursuit of justice.

We seek to constrain evil and empower good,  
without partisan preference  
or subjective judgment, as defined  
by the law and by the Constitutions  
of the United States and Ohio.



**DAVE YOST**

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL



# DAVE YOST

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL

Dear Colleagues,

Not all that long ago, mental health wasn't something commonly discussed in public. Fearing judgment, people tended to face their mental battles alone.

Nowadays, though, mental health is ingrained in daily life – and we embrace those who share their struggles.

Although the public's perception of mental health has transformed for the better, society's approach to crime involving mental illness remains a work in progress. Too many Americans with mental illnesses find themselves cycling through a criminal-justice system that is ill-equipped to get them the help they need.

As a result, inmates with diagnosed mental-health conditions make up roughly half of the U.S. jail population and a third of the prison population. Many of them are military veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder.

We need to prioritize public safety, yes, but we cannot accept incarceration as a solution to mental illness. An illness of the mind deserves as much compassionate care as an ailment of the body. It makes no sense to send someone to jail for having a heart condition, and the same is true for a mental illness.

The Attorney General's Task Force on Criminal Justice and Mental Illness has built a modernized support network to connect this vulnerable population with the community resources they need to avoid future involvement with the justice system.

I thank all who serve on or work with the task force, especially my co-chair, former Ohio Supreme Court Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton, who probably has done more than anyone else to push, pull, coax and cajole our criminal-justice system to recognize and respond to the key role that mental illness plays in crime.

This report outlines the efforts of the task force to knit together the resources of social-service agencies, law enforcement, courts, the Ohio Legislature and penal institutions to better cope with and help the mentally ill.

God bless all who work with us on this humane and necessary project.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dave Yost".

Dave Yost  
Ohio Attorney General

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

AGING COMMITTEE .....	1
BEST PRACTICES & MENTAL-HEALTH TRAINING FOR JAILS COMMITTEE.....	2
COMPETENCY RESTORATION AND PROBATE COURT ISSUES COMMITTEE.....	3
DIVERSION AND RE-ENTRY COMMITTEE .....	4
EDUCATION AND STIGMA COMMITTEE.....	5
HOUSING COMMITTEE .....	5
JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMITTEE.....	7
LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE .....	8
POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE.....	9
PROBATION AND COMMUNITY SUPERVISION COMMITTEE.....	10
PSYCHIATRY AND TREATMENT COMMITTEE .....	10
RESEARCH AND BEST-PRACTICES COMMITTEE .....	11
RESOURCE AND CARE COORDINATION COMMITTEE .....	12
SPECIALIZED DOCKETS COMMITTEE .....	13
VETERANS COURTS AND MILITARY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE .....	13

People with mental illness cycle in and out of the criminal-justice system with alarming frequency. Thoughtful research and evidence-based practices are needed to break the cycle — to turn this vulnerable population toward community resources and divert those involved in the system or at risk of involvement toward programming and treatment.

Since December 2011, the Ohio Task Force on Criminal Justice and Mental Illness has been addressing these issues. Co-chaired by Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost and former Ohio Supreme Court Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton, the task force consists of more than 500 members from across disciplines who serve on 15 committees, each with a distinct purpose and goals related to curbing the number of people with mental illness who become trapped in the system.

What follows is a summary of the work of the task force committees during fiscal years 2023 and 2024:

## **AGING COMMITTEE**

### **Committee co-chairs**

- **Rebecca Grimm**, Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (MHAS)
- **Monica Walker**, Ohio Attorney General's Elder Justice Unit

### **Purpose**

The Aging Committee works to raise awareness of the needs and challenges of Ohio's older population and to recommend options and best practices for reducing the prevalence of elder neglect, fraud and abuse, placing a special emphasis on the role of the courts and public-safety systems.

### **Work highlights**

- The Aging Committee planned the Older Adult Crisis Academy, hearing presentations from the Ohio MHAS Forensic Team, the Crisis Systems Landscape Analysis and Access to Wellness, and a presentation by Dr. Bonnie Burman, president of the Ohio Council for Cognitive Health, on the intersection of the criminal-justice system and dementia in Ohio.
- Committee members also focused on goal setting and planning, identifying some of the priorities and interest areas among our members. The latter included system navigation and service connection for older adults.
- In addition, the committee heard a presentation from Dr. Kathleen Rogers, a geriatrician at Cleveland Clinic Akron General. Dr. Rogers provided insight on the needs of her older adult patients, how treatment for older adults impacts a family, and her ideas on how resources can be made available in streamlined ways to older adults and their support systems.

### **Next steps and goals**

- Continue to support the Centralized Behavioral Health Call Center/988 number and the Learning Community through Crisis Academy, National Learning Community, Mental Health First Aid and SUD First Aid.
- Continue to support the Ohio Crisis Task Force, a group of thoughtful leaders across disciplines who guide the next steps for crisis work. These experts help to ensure that there's a framework for policy and strategies that lead to sustainable investments; reimbursement and benefit alignment;

a consistent lexicon; introduction of new and innovative technology; and evidence-based approaches and alignment with national best practices on crisis continuums.

- Strengthen the partnership with the Attorney General’s Elder Abuse Commission to address the challenges that arise when the criminal-justice system interacts with older Ohioans. The committee will work on goals to aid understanding, advocacy and response to such situations.

## **BEST PRACTICES & MENTAL-HEALTH TRAINING FOR JAILS COMMITTEE**

### **Committee co-chairs**

- **Dr. AJ McConnell**, Forum Ohio
- **Geoff Stobart**, Franklin County Sheriff’s Office

### **Purpose**

The Best Practices and Mental Health Training for Jails Committee seeks to ensure that the correctional population receives treatment for mental illness that adheres to the highest standards of care supported by current scientific research. It aims to educate operators of correctional systems (judges, jail administrators, clinicians, physicians, forensic examiners, correctional staff, etc.) on best practices concerning the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness in correctional populations. The committee also strives to promote an environment of curiosity and engagement by creating tools for training stakeholders at every knowledge and experience level with minimal required resources.

### **Work highlights**

- The committee offered three webinars on “Collaborative Healthcare for Incarcerated Individuals” and a webinar on the “Dementia Friends of Ohio.” To date, the committee has developed eight webinars focusing on finding ways to support those who encounter justice-involved individuals with mental illness and providing them with evidence-based tools to interact with and care for these individuals.
- In January 2024, Dr. McConnell, a psychologist in private practice, and Chief Deputy Geoff Stobart accepted the committee co-chair roles.
- The committee continues to develop additional webinars focusing on medication-assisted treatment (MAT) in Jails” and to work with jailed individuals with developmental disabilities.

### **Next steps and goals**

The committee goal is to continue creating webinars and finding other ways to educate and train its myriad stakeholders.

# COMPETENCY RESTORATION AND PROBATE COURT ISSUES COMMITTEE

## Committee co-chairs

- **Judge David D. Brannon**, Montgomery County Probate Court
- **Lisa D. Gordish**, Ohio Health of Mental Health and Addiction Services

## Purpose

The Competency Restoration and Probate Court Issues Committee, established in 2021, helps stakeholders understand, implement and utilize laws and regulations pertaining to criminal competency and civil commitments. It also seeks to educate, train and provide resources for people in the criminal-justice system with a mental illness and to streamline services as a way of improving outcomes and minimizing the burden on the system.

## Work highlights

- The committee saw a noteworthy increase in membership, allowing for rich discussion among stakeholders from various agencies statewide intertwined with clients of the criminal-justice and probate court systems.
- The committee continued to serve as a platform for valuable resource sharing – including resources from the Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission on Competency Restoration; the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services on Senate Bill 2 and Outpatient Competency Restoration programs; and Montgomery County, specifically on local rules related to mental-illness matters.
- The committee hosted presentations on programs and processes affecting competency restoration and probate court issues since the August 2021 implementation of Senate Bill 2.
- The committee provided education and discussion with an Outpatient Competency Restoration program of MHAS and the Dismiss and Refer process of the Montgomery County Probate Court.

## Next steps and goals

- Continue to focus on the effects of Senate Bill 2 and how it has changed the landscape of care through the Outpatient Competency Restoration and Probate Court processes.
- Finalize the cleanup of Senate Bill 2 recommendations through a multidisciplinary subcommittee.
- Continue to monitor case completions within Outpatient Competency Restoration programs as well as barriers that prevent clients from successfully completing program requirements.
- Meet at least bimonthly to provide a platform for stakeholders to discuss best practices and to create and share standardized documents, templates and resources for the Dismiss and Probate processes statewide.
- Propose local rules and forms regarding Dismiss and Refer and civil commitments for Probate and other trial courts to consider adopting.
- Continue to identify best practices within Outpatient Competency Restoration and Probate Court issues.

# DIVERSION AND RE-ENTRY COMMITTEE

## Committee co-chairs

- **Linda Janes**, Alvis House
- **Darryl Graves**, Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC)
- **Andrew Laubenthal**, Lorain County Sheriff's Office

## Purpose

The Diversion and Re-entry Committee works to promote diversion as an alternative to incarceration for those with mental illness. It also studies and promotes ways for newly released incarcerated individuals to successfully re-enter society.

## Work highlights

- Committee members agreed to focus on identifying challenges associated with accessing peer support or becoming a peer supporter.
- The committee sought information from the ODRC and ODHMAS and learned that, as of June 2023, ODRC had more than 150 incarcerated individuals trained as peer mentors in 13 institutions; they are not certified by ODHMAS but do mentor other incarcerated individuals. For the same time period, ODHMAS reported having 2,378 certified Adult Peer Supporters and 17 certified Youth Peer Supporters, with the latter being a newer certification.
- The committee continued to support both departments' efforts to remove barriers to certification for incarcerated people.
- The committee added a third chairperson, Andy Laubenthal, who is a Project Specialist for the Lorain County Sheriff's Office.
- A recruitment effort resulted in growth for the committee, which now has 40 members statewide.

## Next steps and goals

- Enhance efforts and resources for re-entry.
- Continue to advocate for 1115 Medicaid waivers so that adults and juveniles in incarcerated settings become eligible for Medicaid benefits.
- Support and help implement identified recommendations from the Ohio Supreme Court's Re-entry Task Force and the Governor's Work Group on Competency Restoration and Diversion. Both reports were scheduled for publication in summer 2024.
- Identify training topics related to diversion and re-entry and provide a training session at all future committee meetings.



## EDUCATION AND STIGMA COMMITTEE

### Committee co-chair

- **Carrie Bartunek**, Ohio Attorney General's Office

### Purpose

The Education and Stigma Committee focuses on mental-health training for personnel in the justice system, mental-health training for employees in the foster-care system, and various campaigns that aim to reduce the stigma of mental illness and to promote mental wellness.

### Work highlights

The Education and Stigma Committee focused its work on several areas of concentration:

- **Mental-health training for personnel in the justice system**  
The committee worked with the *Ohio Judicial College* to provide Mental Health First Aid Training to personnel from eight county veterans courts. Additionally, Youth Mental Health First Aid Training was provided to 378 juvenile court personnel throughout Ohio. The committee also secured a mental-health presentation for Angela Phelps-White, Executive Director of the Ohio Civil Rights Commission, and her staff of 80 employees.
- **Mental-health training for employees in the foster-care system**  
The committee partnered with the Ohio Child Welfare Training Center (OCWT) and Mental Health America SW to provide Youth Mental Health First Aid Training.
- **Campaign to curb the stigma of mental illness and to promote mental wellness**  
The committee partnered with RecoveryOhio on its statewide campaign to create a media toolkit addressing the importance of using appropriate words and images when reporting about mental health and addiction. This kit was shared with media outlets statewide as the anti-stigma campaign rolled out.

## HOUSING COMMITTEE

### Committee co-chairs

- **Sean Thomas**, Ohio Housing Finance Agency
- **Elaine Gimmel**, EDEN Inc.

### Purpose

The newly revived Housing Committee focuses on new state and federal housing programs and regulations as well as related best practices.

### Work highlights

- The committee's first accomplishment was simply to pull the group together again after a long break. The previous membership list was very dated and, as such, in need of revision. Thirty-five people were identified, and most attended the committee meetings that were held during the period covered by this report.

- A goal of the previous Housing Committee was to implement a Landlord Mitigation Claims Fund — a collaborative initiative involving the Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA), Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction. About \$115,000 was available for the Stepping Up pilot program, which provides insurance on rental units to landlords enrolled in Stepping Up who rent to those with severe and persistent mental illnesses in eight counties. Landlords may submit damage claims up to \$5,000 for up to two months' rent if a tenant abandons the apartment before the lease ends. The cap aligns with the potential deductible a landlord receives for his/her own property insurance and can help a landlord with small claims that aren't appropriate to submit to his/her own insurance company. All pilot funds were used. And additional \$378,000 in funds is available for landlords in additional counties. MHAS is reviewing applications from 14 counties. The department is also administering the Landlord Incentive Program, created in the current state operating budget. The program provides funds to county Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Services Boards to provide incentive payments to landlords willing to rent to individuals with a criminal record, those who experience mental illness and/or substance-use disorders, and/or those who are being discharged from a psychiatric hospital. Up to \$2,000 can be provided per individual. Nineteen boards are participating in the program, with \$1 million available for the first half of the biennium.
- Recent state and federal housing policy activity were big topics at the committee's last meeting. On the state level, the Ohio Senate Select Committee on Housing released its report on housing-supply issues statewide. Several bills were introduced that align with the recommendations in the report, although not every issue is expected to be taken care of in the current legislative session. The committee will work to ensure that any new housing-related efforts address the needs of the population the task force seeks to help.
- On the federal level, the Department of Housing and Urban Development has proposed a new rule that would not categorically deny access to HUD-assisted housing — or automatically terminate such housing — for those with a criminal record. This would include Housing Choice Vouchers, which are administered by public housing agencies. The proposed rule would greatly benefit Ohio if it led to more consistent rules and policies among PHAs statewide. Currently, there are noteworthy differences from county to county.

# JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMITTEE

## Committee co-chairs

- **Emily Haynes**, Ohio Department of Children & Youth
- **Judge Julie Bruns**, Montgomery County Juvenile Court

## Purpose

The Juvenile Justice Committee reset its focus after a deep dive into mental-health and juvenile-justice concerns in which committee members identified what they thought was going well, what needed attention and possible solutions. In general, members use the committee to connect with invested and passionate people so they can set youth up for success.

## Work highlights

- The committee worked to expand its connections statewide so that when a specific youth needs something, members can reach out to the right person for help. Committee members actively recruited members statewide, increasing its number to 62 from 48.
- As a result of its deep dive, the committee decided to couple mental-health therapy and awareness with programs that bring *hope* and *interest* to youth. For that reason, members focused on building partnerships around workforce programs in detention centers. Interest, participation and mentorship in workforce programs offer hope to youth struggling with mental-health issues. As a pilot project, the committee began partnering with agencies and entities that have a focus on Department of Youth Services (DYS) facilities.
- The committee connected DYS and the Department of Education and Workforce to leverage DEW resources and programs with career tech.
- Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities teaches soft skills but does not currently assess youth in DYS facilities, despite research saying that a push in is demonstrably better than waiting until youth are paroled. The committee facilitated a meeting with DYS and OOD to work on having OOD contractors reach into DYS facilities for these assessments.
- The committee connected Aramark Food Service to DYS to bring the ServSafe program and curriculum to DYS. Aramark already offers the food-service certification program – which encompasses food management, inventory control and fine dining – in adult facilities. Aramark also teaches resume writing, interview skills, teamwork and study skills. A ServSafe certificate allows a person to start out as a manager in food service. Aramark is eager to bring the program to D

# LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE

## Committee co-chairs

- **Jeff Futo**, Kent State University
- **Steven M. Click**, Ohio Department of Public Safety

## Purpose

The Law Enforcement Committee seeks to help improve outcomes when law enforcement interacts with people with mental illness. Members promote the importance of diverting people with mental illness from the criminal-justice system to treatment alternatives and seek ways to transform crisis-response systems so that law enforcement is included only when there is an immediate or imminent threat to safety or a serious criminal concern.

## Work highlights

- Health-care workers and first responders continued to be trained to respond appropriately to people with mental illness and addiction who are in crisis. QPR, Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety and various CIT trainings were provided to hundreds of law enforcement officers, dispatchers, firefighters, EMS and behavioral-health specialists statewide. More than 200 first responders were certified as QPR instructors, and more than 100 CIT training courses were provided. A new curriculum — “MHFA for Correctional Professionals” — was launched to target employees in correctional settings.
- Ohio continued to expand community-policing strategies to increase their effectiveness in building trust and cooperation between law enforcement and the communities they serve. Awards made possible through the Criminal Justice Coordinating Center of Excellence, Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Office of Criminal Justice Services funded training and CIT program support and expansion initiatives. These initiatives included program peer reviews, training opportunities, information sharing and data-collection efforts, and increased engagement with people with lived experience.
- First-responder wellness continued to be a focus in Ohio. Agencies and initiatives such as the Office of First Responder Wellness (Ohio Department of Public Safety), First Responder’s Bridge, the Ohio ASSIST Post Critical Incident Seminar, and the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation provided education and support to thousands of first responders who have experienced traumatic events. These programs emphasize the importance of mental wellness, offering counseling, peer support, stress-management training, crisis intervention and other services. By prioritizing the well-being of first responders, Ohio aims to ensure that those who serve and protect are equipped with the necessary tools to manage the unique challenges of their roles, ultimately leading to healthier, more resilient first responders.

# POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

## Committee co-chairs

- **W. Zachary Holzapfel**, Hicks Partners
- **Luke Russell**, National Alliance on Mental Illness of Ohio (NAMI)

## Work highlights

### Policy and legislative update

- **House Bill 249:** Adds a fifth element to the pink slip – a psychiatric deterioration standard to consider a person’s treatment history, ability to appreciate the importance of treatment, and likelihood of future deterioration without treatment. Some groups support this change as a way of helping individuals/their families access treatment before a crisis sets in.
- **House Bill 231:** Codifies the development and administration of the 988 suicide and crisis lifeline system within the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. The bill establishes an Ohio 988 Administrator and a 10-cent mobile fee. The most recent budget bill fully funded 988 for 18 months. Supporters believe in the bill’s intent but don’t believe the 10-cent fee can sustain the 988 system. Current funding from the budget bill (HB 33) and the language do much of what HB 231 desires to achieve. Ohio still needs a long-term funding solution.
- **Senate Bill 60/House Bill 97:** Establishes a Mental Health Assistant certification program consisting of two years of intensive training focused solely on behavioral health, mental illness and substance-use disorders. The goal is to extend the care of physicians, freeing them up for more acute and severe cases. CMHAs carry out the treatment plan prescribed by a physician prescribes. Distinctive about the training is that CMHAs would work exclusively under a physician’s supervision. The physician would make the original diagnosis, then meet with a CMHA to discuss a treatment plan and care. CMHAs would have some limits on their prescribing privileges. CMHA graduates would work in inpatient psychiatric units, outpatient mental-health clinics, pediatric practices and primary-care clinics. In primary care and pediatric offices, CMHAs could supplement the expertise of existing physicians. CMHA graduates wouldn’t practice independently; they would function as true physician extenders. CMHA graduates (initially) would be licensed only in Ohio, ensuring that the students we train here stay and practice here.

### Crisis Task Force and 988

Several partners are working with the MHAS to develop a quality crisis-response system to serve as a timely and appropriate alternative to arrest, incarceration, unnecessary hospitalization or placement in a setting with insufficient resources to address the acute nature of the person’s situation. The vision is for every Ohioan to have access to a visible and accessible crisis continuum of supports and services that are person-centered, quality-driven and focused on ensuring that people are stabilized and can thrive in their communities.

### 988 Coalition

The coalition has worked with all key stakeholders in the development, implementation and maintenance of a network that provides accessible and quality crisis services. The 988-call system must be linked to the overall crisis intervention services offered. Some key points:

- 988 will be accessible and promoted in all 88 Ohio counties to call centers familiar with local providers.
- Partnership must be made among call centers and to local community providers.
- Quality services will be offered at the point of contact by those trained in crisis intervention.

- Diversion to treatment is accomplished by coordinating with providers who work with 911, 211 and other helplines, hotlines and warmlines around the state. This reduce use of the criminal-justice system as an option during a crisis.
- A statewide resource directory for mobile response, referrals, crisis stabilization and other services needs to be developed.

## PROBATION AND COMMUNITY SUPERVISION COMMITTEE

### Committee co-chairs

- **Judge Terri L. Kohlrieser**, Allen County Common Pleas Court
- **Dean P. Jenkins**, Cleveland Municipal Court

### Work highlights

*No report at this time. Contact committee chairs for an update on current projects.*

## PSYCHIATRY AND TREATMENT COMMITTEE

### Committee co-chairs

- **Dr. Joy Stankowski**, Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
- **Dr. Adam Sorenson**, Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Board of Logan and Champaign Counties

### Purpose

The Psychiatry and Treatment Committee aims to improve access to behavioral-health interventions and treatment on a continuum that includes prevention and early intervention for people who are involved or at risk for involvement in the criminal-justice system. The committee strives to achieve this through education and collaboration with a variety of stakeholders.

### Work highlights

- The committee saw a change in leadership as longtime co-chair Dr. Jeffrey Hunter stepped down to continue committee participation as a special adviser. Adam Sorenson, Executive Director of the Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Board of Logan and Champaign Counties, joined Dr. Joy Stankowski of MHAS in leading the committee.
- The committee continued a focus on education, with Dr. Stankowski providing a forensic webinar, “The Justice System and Psychiatry: Forensics,” through The Ohio State University. The webinar was recorded and added to a database of previous committee webinars for ongoing training opportunities.
- The committee provided information to members and guests in various areas of emerging treatment. Included was a presentation on Assisted Outpatient Treatment; a discussion of telehealth, a review of standardized forms, and the possibility of new mental health positions (such as a certified mental health assistant).
- The committee also supplied legislative updates to members, including progress on Outpatient Commitment (Senate Bill 2) and a new proposed criteria for evaluation (House Bill 249).

## Next steps and goals

The committee will continue to be a source of educational programs and webinars. Additional areas of focus will include:

- Collaboration with other task force committees, especially the Competency Restoration and Probate Issues Committee, to promote treatment.
- Continued exploration of emerging treatment options and best practices in Ohio.
- Ongoing quarterly meetings.

## RESEARCH AND BEST-PRACTICES COMMITTEE

### Committee co-chairs

- **Natalie Bonfire**, Northeast Ohio Medical University
- **Lisa Shoaf**, Office of Criminal Justice Services

### Purpose

The Research and Best-Practices Committee raises awareness and promotes relevant data, research and evidence-based practices to improve responses of the criminal-justice system to people with mental illness. Our committee members can network with other researchers and evaluators statewide.

### Work highlights

- The committee worked to expand its membership. It now has 19 members.
- In light of a movement at the state level to increase access and transparency of state-level data, the committee developed Data Brief, a task force resource that summarizes publicly available data resources. Data Brief includes a summary of available data sets, data dashboards and other information that are publicly available, along with relevant links to these resources.
- The committee received a demonstration on data collection for crisis intervention teams and quick response teams (QRT) from representatives from Cordata, which is working with the Ohio Criminal Justice Coordinating Center of Excellence on these initiatives.
- Committee members also shared information with one another about current research and evaluation projects, relevant trainings, webinars, newsletters, funding opportunities and other announcements of interest to the group.

### Next steps and goals

The committee has identified the following topics as areas of interest for future discussion: deflection, maternal mental health as it relates to people involved in the criminal-justice system, and suicide prevention. We will invite speakers on these topics to future meetings.

# RESOURCE AND CARE COORDINATION COMMITTEE

## Committee co-chairs

- **Dustin McKee**, Ohio Psychological Association
- **Dr. Dana Vallageon**, Ohio Association of Community Health Centers

## Purpose

Ohio jails and human services agencies are particularly challenged when working with people with serious and persistent mental illness who chronically cycle among jails, hospital Emergency Departments and homelessness. To that end, the Resource and Care Coordination Committee seeks to explore and address issues encountered by these organizations to improve continuity and comprehensiveness of care for this population.

## Work highlights

- The committee explored ways to better connect individuals coming out of jail with community health and support services through Medicaid managed-care organizations (MCOs), Federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), nonprofit organizations, and local governmental agency resources and collaborative initiatives.
- Committee members also examined ways to encourage jails to participate in the state's Health Information Exchange.

## Next steps and goals

- Grow committee membership and participation
- Explore the possibility of a 1115 Medicaid waiver in Ohio to help increase care for individuals who are incarcerated in the period immediately prior to their release to help them succeed and thrive during re-entry. Under the waiver, Medicaid would cover services that address various health concerns, including substance-use disorders and other chronic health conditions.
- Identify or construct a standard template for various organizations (MCOs, community mental health center (CMHCs), FQHCs, jails, free-standing for-profit psychiatric hospitals) that connects those with serious mental illness (SMI) who are released from jail to comprehensive health and mental-health care and human services benefits, emphasizing scalability and replicability across diverse settings (rural, urban).
- Examine opportunities to update existing HIPAA and 42 CFR Part II privacy release forms to streamline and consolidate the forms to reflect updates in federal law and state administrative rules and policies.
- Find ways to achieve better integration of free-standing, for-profit psychiatric hospitals with MCOs, CMHCs and FQHCs to achieve more warm handoffs to the latter entities.
- Explore the role of probation in developing collaborative opportunities with CMHCs, FQHCs and MCOs.
- Promote best practices already in use by various Ohio counties.



## SPECIALIZED DOCKETS COMMITTEE

### Committee co-chairs

- **Christopher Nicastro**, Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addictive Services
- **Judge Teresa Ballinger**, Marion Municipal Court

### Work highlights

The Specialized Dockets Committee worked closely with the Clinical Subcommittee of the Ohio Commission on Specialized Dockets on:

- Creating training on the role of treatment providers/clinicians involved in treatment courts that helps to clarify roles and boundaries of the specialized docket team.
- Examining the role of peers and peer recovery support on certified specialty dockets and recommending guidelines.

**GUIDELINE 1:** Treatment court staff receive training on the core competencies of peer recovery support.

**GUIDELINE 2:** The treatment court has written roles and responsibilities that align with the nationally recognized competencies and ethics of peer recovery support services.

**GUIDELINE 3:** The treatment court program has established processes for recruiting, hiring and orienting peer recovery support specialists to the treatment court.

**GUIDELINE 4:** The treatment court ensures that peer recovery support specialists receive regular and ongoing external supervision from qualified staff.

**GUIDELINE 5:** Peer recovery support specialists receive annual ethics training, and policies and procedures are in place to address ethical issues.

## VETERANS COURTS AND MILITARY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

### Committee co-chairs

- **Judge Gary A. Loxley**, Warren County Court
- **Dr. Rita Wood**, Veterans Administration

### Purpose

The Veterans Courts and Military Affairs Committee assists the justice system in dealing with the civil- and criminal-justice needs of our military and veterans, with an emphasis on the physical and emotional causes that led to involvement in the system. The committee's primary areas of focus:

- Raising awareness of programming available to veterans
- Creating political and legal environments that best serve this population through the Veterans Administration and community partners
- Fostering pro-bono programming for civil needs in the system
- Offering a forum for Ohio courts and agencies to exchange ideas, resources and best practices

## Work highlights

- The committee heard from the Executive Director of the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation, who explained his organization's function and effort to host a veterans suicide conference. The committee also reviewed the upcoming renewal of a pilot "concurrent supervision" program established by drug courts in Seneca County and discussed the possibility of using that program to jump-start a similar program for use by all types of specialized dockets (including veterans treatment courts).
- The committee heard from a sergeant in the Cincinnati Police Department who started a new program to identify veterans at the earliest stage of law enforcement contact and provide those officers with resources and assistance. Similarly, Kelly Firesheets, Vice President of Strategy and Partnerships at Cordata Healthcare, gave a presentation about her organization's work in the deflection for veterans: Intercept O Program, which addresses early needs of veterans in crisis.
- A doctoral candidate invited the committee to submit ideas for veterans' justice outreach for the federal Omnibus Bill. Kelly Smith of OhioRISE Medicaid Program, educated the committee about the new in-home and community-based services for children with the most complex behavioral-health challenges.
- Other areas of focus during the biennium:
  - A detailed presentation about a nonprofit organization established to solicit and raise money for veterans participating in a veterans treatment court
  - Virtual peer mentor training conducted by the Specialized Docket Section of the Ohio Supreme Court
  - A discussion of the new federal legislation entitled the COMPACT ACT.
  - A presentation of the Access to Justice Foundation
  - An introduction to relink.org of the Dalton Foundation
  - Veterans job opportunities through Amazon Military Pathways
  - And training opportunities on the Veterans in Crisis program for first responders, police, fire and EMT.
- Finally, recordings of presentations given by the committee co-chairs at a Grand Rounds event have been disseminated (along with their presentation slides) to all medical schools in Ohio.

## Next steps and goals

- Study and provide input on the proposal to create concurrent supervision (not jurisdiction) for VTCs in adjacent or neighboring counties.
- Discuss, review and provide input on proposed state legislation requiring VRSS use by all counties in Ohio, and legislation for the county veterans services commissions to fund veterans treatment courts.
- Provide recommendations on when the new Veterans Justice Act (alternative sentencing options for veterans in the state criminal-justice system) should be proposed and implemented in Ohio.



**DAVE YOST**

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL

---

---

# TASK FORCE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND MENTAL ILLNESS

## FISCAL YEARS 2023 & 2024

---

---

Crime Victim Services  
30 E. Broad St. 23rd Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215  
800-282-0515

[www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov](http://www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov)