



Supreme Court of Florida

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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July is Florida Courts Opioid Awareness Month

Florida and the nation are experiencing a well-documented opioid crisis. There are now more annual deaths from accidental opioid overdose than from traffic crashes.

In response to this crisis, Chief Justice Charles T. Canady has signed a proclamation designating July 2019 within the State Courts System as Opioid Awareness Month, a time for awareness and treatment for opioid-use disorder.

“I call upon judicial officers and court staff members to increase their efforts to understand the effect of opioid use disorder throughout the judicial system and in the cases before them,” Chief Justice Canady’s proclamation states.

Widespread, debilitating, and sometimes fatal opioid-use disorder among Floridians requires judges and court staff members, especially those working in the state’s problem-solving treatment courts as well as family courts, to understand addiction and its effect on the brain, along with treatment standards. The statewide judicial branch opioid initiative offers a six-pronged approach, including training and technical assistance for Florida’s judges and courts staff.

In addition, 72 judges and court staff from all 20 circuits have been selected to be “circuit champions” for this initiative and are currently studying the issues related to opioid use disorder as they intersect with the court.

Education, awareness, accountability, and evidence-based medication-assisted treatment programs can make a difference in Florida. The state’s courts are sensitive to the pain and harm caused by increasing opioid use disorder and committed to improving response. Judges and staff throughout the state will mark July’s Opioid Awareness Month with information about effective programs, self-auditing of evidence-based responses, and promoting conferences and training scheduled for the coming months. In addition to the statewide judicial branch response, various local court awareness events have also been planned.

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