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Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency Hosts More than 500 Justice and Behavioral Health Professionals at 2024 Criminal Justice Advisory Board Conference

PCCD presents Linda K.M. Ludgate Excellence in Leadership Award, John A. Zottola Mental Health and Justice Award, and the Criminal Justice Advisory Board Best Practices Award

State College, PA — Yesterday, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) kicked off the 2024 Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB) Conference in State College with more than 500 participants, the largest number since conference inception in 2007. Over the course of the conference, participants engaged in discussions on new and reemerging issues impacting our criminal justice and behavioral health systems, and innovative solutions to address evolving trends.

"When I think about an event that embodies the spirit and purpose of PCCD's mission, I can't think of a better example than the CJAB Conference," said **PCCD Executive Director Mike Pennington**. "Increased mental health concerns, gun violence, the drug/overdose epidemic, and workforce strains have created challenges for our criminal justice and behavioral health systems. But through the power of collaboration, we can find innovative ways to navigate these trends and create positive outcomes for Pennsylvanians."

This year's theme: "An Evolving Justice System: Adapting and Navigating New Directions" represents the changing landscape of the criminal justice and behavioral health systems and the importance of adopting new and innovative ways to navigate these changes. Presentations and plenary sessions over the two-day conference covered topics ranging from supporting people with substance use disorders, addressing gun and community violence, trauma informed care, using data and technology to improve investigations and public safety, and helping individuals reintegrate into the community after incarceration.

Today, PCCD Executive Director Pennington presented three awards recognizing the accomplishments and leadership of colleagues in the field:

2024 Honorable Linda K.M. Ludgate CJAB Excellence in Leadership Award

President Judge Nancy L. Butts of the Lycoming County Court of Common Pleas was the recipient of this award for her instrumental work in supporting the creation and implementation of treatment programs for individuals within the county jail and returning to

their home communities. Judge Butts was influential in the adoption of Lycoming County's Stepping Up resolution to reduce the number of people with serious mental illness in the Lycoming County Prison and united concerned community members by establishing a Heroin Task Force to educate citizens on prescription opioid abuse and the resources available to prevent and treat addiction.

2024 The Honorable John A. Zottola Mental Health and Justice Award

Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice, Kevin M. Dougherty was a recipient of this award for his leadership in the realm of mental/behavioral health, autism and intellectual disabilities, and juvenile justice for over 20 years. During the past eight years as a member of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, Justice Dougherty has used his platform to push systemic positive change and reform when it comes to the intersection of various special populations and the court system despite his immense responsibility as a justice on the state's highest court.

Chief of Police Charles T. Streightiff of the Huntingdon Borough Police Department was a recipient of this award for his commitment to working with the community to better the lives of our children. He is the founder of an early response handle with care program that identifies youth who may have experienced a traumatic event and is a leading force in establishing a Child Advocacy Center within Huntingdon County to better serve the mental health needs of children.

CJAB Best Practices Award

The **Centre County CJAB** was the recipient of this award for their work in supporting the Stepping Up Initiative, a national initiative to reduce the number of individuals with mental illnesses in jails/prisons, and their support in the creation of the following notable initiatives:

- A behavioral health court for individuals who are diagnosed with a serious mental illness and in need of long-term, highly structured mental health treatment and intensive supervision;
- The Heroin and Opioid Prevention and Education (HOPE) initiative, a collaborative of community agencies working together to eliminate substance abuse and opiate epidemic and overdoses;
- A Reentry Coalition whose primary goal is to enhance the successful return of individuals to the community and thereby reduce recidivism; and
- The Centre County Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) which provides trainings twice a year for justice and behavioral health practitioners and is recognized as one of the best CIT Programs in the Commonwealth.

The conference was hosted by PCCD in partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services and the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania has 67 county-level CJABs who have been instrumental in formulating plans, introducing innovative solutions, and fostering collaborative approaches in all aspects of their local criminal justice system. The boards have diverse memberships which can include high-ranking officials and representatives of courts; corrections; law enforcement; community-based

organizations; health, human services, and victims' services agencies; businesses; and faith-based organizations. PCCD supports CJABs through the provision of technical assistance by CJAB Specialists and making funds available to support CJAB-sponsored initiatives.

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