



# MICHIGAN COURTS NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **State Court Administrator Milt Mack to Co-Chair Initiative to Improve Justice System Response to Mental Illness**

LANSING, MI, April 4, 2019 – State Court Administrator Milton L. Mack, Jr., has been asked to co-chair a national initiative to improve the justice system response to mental illness. A former Chief Judge of the Wayne County Probate Court, Mack has long been an advocate for mental health reform, promoting early intervention and treatment instead of incarceration. Funded by the State Justice Institute (SJI), the initiative is based on a policy [paper](#) by Mack that was published by the Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA).

“We know how to solve the problem – treatment not jail. The challenge is coordinating all levels of government to implement the solution,” said State Court Administrator Milton L. Mack, Jr. “Creating a more sensible path to mental health treatment will improve quality of life for people with mental illness, reduce homelessness, and save lives.”

Judge Mack noted several key statistics:

- 2,000,000 persons with mental illness will spend time in our nation’s jails and prisons this year.
- 1 in 10 police calls across the nation now involve mental health situations.
- People with mental illness are 16 times more likely to be killed than other civilians when approached or stopped by law enforcement.
- In 44 states, a jail or prison holds more prisoners with mental illness than the largest state psychiatric hospital.

The SJI grant will facilitate efforts by the National Center for State Courts to work with the Conference of Chief Justices and COSCA in addressing these key areas:

- developing resources, best practices, and recommended standards for mental health issues in state courts;
- helping courts implement a common-sense model for responding to mental health issues before a person is in crisis;
- improving case flow management by examining civil commitment and criminal cases involving individuals with mental illness;
- providing education for judges and court personnel; and
- building the capacity of state and local court leaders to implement reforms.

Mack further explained that a better approach involves implementing an “outpatient model” of care so the persons with severe mental illness can regain control of their lives. This model requires early intervention at key stages, including training for law enforcement, and screening to divert individuals to treatment rather than jail.

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