



MICHIGAN COURTS NEWS RELEASE

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Michigan's Judiciary Joins Regional Judicial Opioid Initiative

Eight states judiciaries fight growing epidemic by working together to save lives

LANSING, MI, February 21, 2019 – The Michigan Supreme Court is one of eight founding state judiciaries in the newly-launched Regional Judicial Opioid Initiative (RJOI). Organized by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), the purpose of the initiative is to develop unified strategies to combat the growing opioid epidemic in states hit hardest by the crisis. In addition to Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, and West Virginia are partnering to bring together local, state, and federal resources.

“State judiciaries have an important role to play in the fight against the opioid epidemic because judges are positioned on the front lines—as leaders in the courts and in their communities,” said Chief Justice Bridget M. McCormack, who serves on the RJOI Leadership Committee along with chief justices and state court administrators from all eight states “By working together, we can provide families with tools to combat the epidemic and save lives.”

The opioid epidemic has become a burgeoning problem for all aspects of the judicial system. According to the NCSC, in a recent survey of chief justices and court administrators, 55 percent claimed that the opioid epidemic severely impacted the courts. Arrests involving opioids are skyrocketing, and according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), drug overdoses (involving synthetic opioids) increased by 6.2 to 9.0 per 100,000 between 2016 and 2017 nationwide.

Grim statistics detailing the growing crisis make the need for the initiative clear. In Michigan:

- An estimated 2,662 residents died from drug overdoses in 2017.
- There's been an 82 percent increase in deaths over five years.
- Drug overdose death rates are higher than the national average.
- Overdose deaths now exceed traffic and firearm deaths combined.

The initiative's Leadership Committee will determine goals, strategies, and project committees, and will appoint two judges per state to facilitate the everyday work of the initiative. The five project committees will focus on: Child Welfare; Evidence-Based Practices; Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs; Research; and Regional Capacity of Treatment.

The project committees each have their own respective goals, plans, and strategies to address the opioid epidemic. Each committee contributes to the collective mission of RJOI, which is to close the gaps and remove barriers involving information, enforcement, services, and treatment. Visit the [RJOI website](#) to learn more.