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**Judges and Psychiatrists Meet to Develop Strategies for  
Individuals with Behavior Health Needs in the Criminal Justice System**

ARLINGTON, Va. (October 15, 2013) — On October 13, 2013, 50 leading judges and psychiatrists from across the country met in Philadelphia to begin developing strategies to improve outcomes for individuals with behavioral health needs in the criminal justice system. As part of an ongoing collaboration, the Judicial-Psychiatric Leadership Forum was convened by the Judges' Leadership Initiative for Criminal Justice and Behavioral Health and the Psychiatric Leadership Group for Criminal Justice and coordinated by the American Psychiatric Foundation and the Council of State Governments Justice Center.

"The progress made at this forum is an important step forward in addressing the needs of people with mental illnesses who become entangled in the criminal justice system. The cost of incarcerating rather than treating people with mental illnesses both in financial and human terms is exorbitant and unnecessary," said Judge Steve Leifman, Co-Chair of the Judges Leadership Initiative.

"It is critical that psychiatrists engage judges in a dialogue to identify effective strategies that result in improved public health and safety outcomes. It is a shared set of concerns that require a shared vision and collaboration to have the largest impact," said Fred Osher, MD, Director of Health Systems and Services Policy for the Justice Center.

An estimated 17% of people admitted to jail have serious mental disorders—more than three times rate in the general population. Nearly 70% of adults in jails have a substance use disorder. The impact of this overrepresentation is not only extremely detrimental to the inmates needing treatment, but also causes extra stress on the criminal justice system, increases government spending, and is associated with poor public safety and public health outcomes. Many of these individuals with behavioral health issues who are involved in the criminal justice system have complex needs that cannot be adequately resolved by one system alone.

The Judges' Leadership Initiative for Criminal Justice and Behavioral Health, originally established in 2004, works to stimulate, support, and enhance efforts by judges to take leadership roles to improve judicial responses to justice-involved people with behavioral health needs. The [Psychiatric Leadership Group](#) was formed to provide an opportunity for psychiatric leaders to come together and collaborate with judges to effectively respond to the behavioral health issues that they may confront in the courtroom.

Since 2010, APF has worked with the [Council of State Governments Justice Center](#) to support the work of these two groups. The groups have worked together to develop a [training module for judges](#) on

mental disorders in the courtroom and have created a two-page [bench card](#) to help judges recognize the signs of possible mental disorders among individuals in the courtroom and to respond sensitively and productively.

The **American Psychiatric Foundation**, APA's philanthropic subsidiary, works to create a mentally healthy nation by advancing mental health, overcoming mental illness, and eliminating stigma. Visit APF at [www.americanpsychiatricfoundation.org](http://www.americanpsychiatricfoundation.org).

**The American Psychiatric Association** is a national medical specialty society whose physician members specialize in diagnosis, treatment, prevention, and research of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at [www.psychiatry.org](http://www.psychiatry.org).

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