Judicial Symposium on Opiate Addiction
June 30, 2014

This symposium is a joint effort between Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections, Office of Criminal Justice Services, the Supreme Court of Ohio, and the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities. Currently, Ohio’s prison system and local jails are inundated with drug offenders who pose a low criminogenic risk, and yet who are being incarcerated at significant rates.

Assuring that local judges better understand the dynamics of addiction and how to more effectively intervene with this population should result in a substantial reduction in prison and jail populations. The additional treatment resources that are now available through Medicaid expansion provide our state with a unique opportunity to intervene with the opioid addicted population in a manner that could demonstrate dramatic short term clinical and economic results.

The goal of this symposium is to facilitate more effective integration between the criminal justice and addiction treatment systems by:

1) Educating judges about treatment alternatives, including medication-assisted treatment, and
2) Encouraging the use of evidence based criminal justice tools like criminogenic risk assessment, and graduated sentencing.

Invited will be municipal court and common pleas judges from all 88 counties, along with a team from their communities to include the following members:

- Common Pleas Court Judge
- Municipal Court Judge
- Sheriff
- ADAMH Board
- Opiate Treatment Provider
- County Commissioner
- Prosecutor
- Parole/Probation Officer
- Defense Counsel
- Local Selection

The agenda consists of time spent listening to a panel of judges running successful specialty dockets focused on drug abuse (best practices), an addiction expert, and an expert on medication-assisted treatment and the important role it plays in treating opiate addiction. There will be a keynote speaker (still to be identified) with experience in criminal justice and opiate addiction. Most importantly, there will be significant time allotted for teams to discuss and plan this kind of approach in their communities. Before leaving, they will be given planning tools to create a system that deals effectively with the high numbers of opiate-addicted offenders in their communities. These groups will then be invited back in November to share their experiences, in conjunction with the Supreme Court’s annual drug court conference.