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For Immediate Release

Kentucky Drug Court head Connie M. Payne inducted into National Association of Drug Court Professionals Hall of Fame Award is NADCP's highest honor

FRANKFORT, Ky., July 28, 2017 – Connie M. Payne, who heads Kentucky Drug Court and other specialty court programs for the Administrative Office of the Courts, has been named to the National Association of Drug Court Professionals Hall of Fame for her lasting contributions to the treatment court field. Payne was inducted into NADCP's Stanley M. Goldstein Drug Court Hall of Fame on July 12 during the association's annual conference in Washington. This is the highest honor bestowed by the NADCP.



“Connie is a dynamic leader who has made a dramatic impact on countless lives across the nation,” Carolyn Hardin, NADCP chief of training and research, said during the induction ceremony. “Her work in Kentucky has helped transform the way people with substance use and mental health disorders are treated, and there has been no better champion on Capitol Hill for treatment courts and recovery. I am proud to induct Connie Payne into the Stanley Goldstein Drug Court Hall of Fame.”

Named in honor of the nation's first Drug Court judge, the Goldstein Hall of Fame honors individuals whose work has not only improved individual treatment court programs but also

enhanced the treatment court model and movement. In Kentucky, treatment court programs are called specialty court programs.

“Connie’s compassion for people who suffer from substance use and mental health issues has been the impetus for her extraordinary leadership of Kentucky’s Drug Court program,” Chief Justice of Kentucky John D. Minton Jr. said. “Treating substance abuse is inherently difficult and we’re fortunate to have her at the helm of our state’s specialty courts.

“Over the years, Connie has been a steady force for Drug Court as the program faced budget shortfalls, a historic opioid epidemic and the adoption of medication-assisted treatment. She’s worked with Drug Court judges and staff, legislators, and our state and national partners to help ensure the success and long-term viability of this critical program. She’s made the most of her unique position to advance the cause of specialty courts and is highly deserving of the NADCP’s highest honor.”

After 14 years of overseeing the Kentucky Drug Court program, Payne will retire from the court system on Aug. 31.

“Receiving the Goldstein Award is a fitting end to an exceptional career,” AOC Director Laurie K. Dudgeon said. “Drug Court will continue to benefit from the many advancements Connie set in motion. I appreciate her years of service and wish her the best in retirement.”

Payne came to the AOC in 2003 to head the Kentucky Drug Court program and she has been instrumental in expanding the number of programs from nine to 54. Today, Drug Court serves 113 of 120 counties. She has also overseen the implementation of five Veterans Treatment Courts, a Mental Health Court and a DUI Court, which are based on the Drug Court treatment model. In 2015, the AOC created the Department of Specialty Courts to reflect the addition of these specialty courts.

On the national level, she served as secretary of the NADCP Board of Directors from 2008-2015 and president of the Council of State Drug Court Associations from 2011-2012.

Payne was previously an assistant commonwealth’s attorney for nine years under Fayette County Commonwealth’s Attorney Ray Larson. While there, she was assigned to assist in developing the Fayette County Drug Court program. The policies and forms she helped create are still in use today by the state’s Drug Court programs.

She is also known for her interests outside of work, which include travel, bicycling and hiking. She has climbed Mount Kilimanjaro, hiked the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu, biked in Thailand and Cambodia and spent several weeks in India working with Habitat for Humanity. She is a certified yoga instructor.

Payne is the third Kentuckian to be inducted into the NADCP Hall of Fame. Supreme Court Justice Mary C. Noble (ret.) received the honor in 2004 and Court of Appeals Judge Debra Hembree Lambert received the honor in 2002 while serving as a Family Court judge for Lincoln, Pulaski and Rockcastle counties.

About Kentucky Drug Court

[Kentucky Drug Court](#) is part of the court system's Department of Specialty Courts, which is overseen by the Administrative Office of the Courts. In addition to Drug Court, the department includes DUI Court, Mental Health Court and Veterans Treatment Court programs. Collectively referred to as Specialty Courts, these programs are similarly structured and supervised and have the same goal — to give eligible participants the opportunity to make positive changes in their lives. The programs all provide oversight by a judge, case management, treatment and drug testing.

Drug Court provides court-supervised treatment as an alternative to incarceration. The program's success can be measured in the number of lives changed and the cost savings to Kentucky taxpayers. For every \$1 spent on Drug Court graduates, the state saves \$2.72 on what it would have spent on incarcerating these individuals.

The program has helped reduce illicit drug use and related criminal activity and lowered rearrest, reconviction and reincarceration rates. It has increased payments of delinquent child support and improved employment rates. As of June 2017, 8,593 individuals had graduated from Drug Court programs statewide and participants had paid \$6.2 million in child support and \$6.7 million in court obligations, including restitution and fines.

Drug Court coordinates the efforts of the judiciary, prosecution, defense bar, probation, law enforcement, mental health, social services and treatment communities to actively intervene and break the cycle of substance abuse, addiction and crime. The program consists of three phases that last at least one year and are followed by aftercare. Drug Court staff and participants work together to develop individual program plans with specific responsibilities and goals with timetables. Plans include group, family and individual counseling; frequent and random urine testing; education and vocational training; scheduled payments of restitution, child support and court fees; and health and community activities. Participants report directly to their Drug Court judge, who rewards progress and sanctions noncompliance.

When participants successfully complete the program, charges may be dismissed through diversion, or conditional discharge may be granted through probation. Judges who participate in Drug Court volunteer their time to the program.

Administrative Office of the Courts

The AOC is the operations arm for the state court system and supports the activities of nearly 3,400 court system employees and 404 elected justices, judges and circuit court clerks. As the fiscal agent for the state court system, the AOC also executes the Judicial Branch budget.

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