



Administrative Office of the Courts

1001 Vandalay Drive, Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

502-573-2350 or 800-928-2350

www.courts.ky.gov

For Immediate Release

Contact: Leigh Anne Hiatt, APR, Public Information Officer, Administrative Office of the Courts, Phone 502-573-2350, Cell 859-619-7916, lhiatt@kycourts.net



Commissioner Wendy Morris speaks at the RESTORE news conference while (l to r) Saint Joseph-London Medical Surgical Unit Director Shannon Adams, Operation UNITE President/CEO Nancy and Chief Justice John D. Minton Jr. look on. Morris is commissioner for the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities in the Cabinet for Health and Family Services.



The speakers at the RESTORE news conference were (l to r) Saint Joseph-London Medical Surgical Unit Director Shannon Adams and Drug Court graduate, Operation UNITED President/CEO Nancy Hale, Family Court Judge Janie McKenzie-Wells, Chief Justice of John D. Minton Jr., Office of Drug Control Policy Executive Director Van Ingram and Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities Commissioner Wendy Morris.

News release starts on next page.



Kentucky Court of Justice kicks off new effort to help courts handle opioid-related cases

Chief Justice Minton announced RESTORE initiative at news conference today at the Capitol

FRANKFORT, Ky., April 11, 2019 — The Kentucky Court of Justice used a news conference in the Supreme Court Courtroom at the Capitol to launch a new initiative that will help judges, circuit court clerks and court personnel further address Kentucky’s opioid epidemic.

The RESTORE initiative is funded by a federal grant. RESTORE stands for Responsive Education to Support Treatment in Opioid Recovery Efforts.

“The opioid epidemic has placed a severe strain on the courts and substance use disorders have taken a toll on individuals and families throughout the commonwealth,” Chief Justice John D. Minton Jr. said. “We want to give our judges, circuit court clerks and court staff the training and resources they need to effectively handle opioid-related cases. By working together, we can make a difference for Kentuckians affected by substance use disorders.”

(Chief Justice Minton’s full remarks can be found [here](#). A booklet describing the RESTORE Initiative can be found [here](#).)

The Administrative Office of the Courts is carrying out the RESTORE initiative as a subrecipient of a grant from the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#). The grant was awarded to the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services as part of the collaborative [Kentucky Opioid Response Effort](#).

“The Cabinet is dedicated to defeating the opioid crisis,” said Commissioner Wendy Morris, Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities in the Cabinet for Health and Family Services. “We believe prevention works, treatment is effective and people can – and do – recover.”

Van Ingram, executive director for the Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy, said that the opioid epidemic is the worst epidemic our country has ever seen and Kentucky is ground zero. “It’s been a long fight but we’re starting to see some progress because of these collaborations across agencies and branches of government.”

“We’re creating hope and a changing culture,” said Nancy Hale, president/CEO of Operation UNITE. “We cannot arrest our way out of this epidemic.” She said that UNITE’s holistic approach to treating substance use disorders has caught the eye of national leaders in Washington, D.C., thanks to the support of U.S. Congressman Hal Rogers, who represents Kentucky’s 5th Congressional District.

Chief Justice Minton said the opioid epidemic has hit Kentucky particularly hard, with the state's overdose death rates among the top in the nation. "The good news is that Kentucky's outcomes are finally beginning to improve," he said. "Opioid-related drug charges are declining, opioid-related overdose deaths are down and access to medication assisted treatment is up. The bad news is that there were still nearly 8,000 heroin-related charges and more than 1,000 overdose deaths related to opioids in the state last year. We still have much work to do."

Speakers

Those speaking at the news conference were:

- Chief Justice of Kentucky John D. Minton Jr.
- Wendy Morris, Commissioner, Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities, Cabinet for Health and Family Services
- Van Ingram, Executive Director, Office of Drug Control Policy, Kentucky Justice & Public Safety Cabinet
- Family Court Judge Janie McKenzie-Wells, 24th Judicial Circuit and RESTORE Leader Team member
- Nancy Hale, President/CEO, Operation UNITE
- Shannon Adams, Medical Surgical Unit Director, Saint Joseph-London and Drug Court Graduate

After today's news conference, Kentucky judges and court staff will be invited to attend two one-day summits in 2019, which will be offered in each of Kentucky's seven appellate districts. The RESTORE Leadership Team is responsible for planning these events. The team consists of judges from Circuit, Family and District courts and a circuit court clerk. Representatives from the Departments of Family & Juvenile Services, Pretrial Services and Specialty Courts at the Administrative Office of the Courts will provide support to the Leadership Team.

About the Administrative Office of the Courts

The AOC is the operations arm for the Kentucky Court of Justice and supports the activities of more than 3,400 state court employees and 406 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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