



**John D. Minton, Jr.**  
Chief Justice of Kentucky

## **Supreme Court of Kentucky**

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### **RESTORE Initiative: Helping Kentucky Courts Address the Opioid Epidemic**

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Chief Justice John D. Minton Jr.  
Kentucky Court of Justice News Conference  
April 11, 2019, 1:30 p.m. EDT  
Supreme Court Courtroom, Capitol, Frankfort, Kentucky

## **Program**

### **Welcome & Kentucky Court of Justice Perspective**

*Chief Justice of Kentucky John D. Minton Jr.*

### **Kentucky Perspective**

*Wendy Morris, Commissioner, Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities, Cabinet for Health and Family Services*

*Van Ingram, Executive Director, Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy, Justice & Public Safety Cabinet*

### **Community Perspective**

*Nancy Hale, President/CEO, Operation UNITE*

*Family Court Judge Janie McKenzie-Wells, 24th Judicial Circuit and RESTORE Leadership Team Member*

### **Individual Perspective**

*Shannon Adams, Medical Surgical Unit Director, Saint Joseph-London and Drug Court Graduate*

## **Q & A**

## **Adjourn**

## **Group photo of all speakers with Chief Justice Minton**

*Chief Justice Minton's remarks on next page*

## **Chief Justice Minton's Remarks**

Welcome and thank you for coming to the launch of a new initiative that aims to improve how Kentucky courts are handling one of the most entrenched problems facing our commonwealth – the opioid epidemic that's devastating the lives of individuals and families at a rate that's among the highest in the country.

We want to give our judges, circuit court clerks and court personnel the tools and resources they need to effectively handle the opioid-related cases that come before the courts. I'm pleased that we're going to be able to do that through RESTORE, which stands for Responsive Education to Support Treatment in Opioid Recovery Efforts.

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.

I want to welcome an impressive group of speakers, whom I'll introduce in a few minutes; my fellow Supreme Court justices, who are in Frankfort this week to hear oral arguments; the judges and circuit court clerks who traveled to be here; members of the Administrative Office of the Courts' Departments of Family & Juvenile Services, Pretrial Services and Specialty Courts, who will play a key role in helping us carry out this initiative; the reporters who are here to cover this story; and all of our other guests.

Over the last two decades, the opioid epidemic has created a national public health crisis, ravaged communities, torn apart families and taken lives. Kentucky has been one of the hardest-hit states, with a staggering number of overdose deaths.

The good news is that Kentucky's outcomes are finally beginning to improve. 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 is still much work to do: Last year our state saw nearly 8,000 heroin-related charges and more than 1,000 opioid-related overdose deaths. Some counties still have limited access or no access to local medication-assisted treatment providers. And we're seeing the surge of new drugs as meth-related charges are skyrocketing in Kentucky.

While the opioid epidemic has placed a severe strain on the courts, we're fortunate that the courts are in a unique position to positively impact the crisis. The decisions made at each point of contact within the justice system can profoundly affect the recovery process of each adult, young person and family who interact with the courts. We have a duty to understand what research puts forth as the most effective court practices, interventions and treatment models that support lifelong recovery.

Our belief in what the courts and the commonwealth can bring to bear on this epidemic is why we're excited about the RESTORE initiative. I especially want to thank the newly formed RESTORE Leadership Team, which is comprised of Circuit, Family and District Court judges and a circuit court clerk. The Leadership Team is responsible for leading this initiative and carrying out next steps after today's news conference.

### **Next Steps**

After today's announcement, we have a busy year ahead. We'll be inviting Kentucky judges and court staff to attend two one-day summits in 2019, one in the summer and one in the fall, which will be offered in each of Kentucky's seven appellate districts.

The RESTORE Summer Summit will focus on understanding the stigma and science behind opioid and substance use disorders. The RESTORE Fall Summit will focus on understanding the treatment and recovery process.

These summits will give us the opportunity to discuss challenging and important topics, such as understanding addiction as a disease, medication-assisted treatment, pregnant and parenting mothers with an opioid use disorder, Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome, understanding craving and relapse, and family preservation in the context of a substance use disorder.

Conversations about these topics aren't easy, but they're necessary as we equip our judges, circuit clerks and staff to deal with the complex challenges surrounding addiction in the real world. We want to prepare court officials to make decisions that support recovery, rather than hinder it.

My vision for RESTORE is that we will gain a shared understanding of substance use disorders and embrace best court practices in dealing with this disease across the state.

Regardless of how bleak the statistics appear when it come to the abuse of opioids and other drugs in Kentucky, we believe that treatment and recovery are possible – for individuals, for families, for communities and for the commonwealth. By working together, we can make a difference.

Now we will hear from those who have seen and experienced firsthand the impact of the opioid epidemic in a variety of ways.

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