



Florida Association of Drug Court Professionals Newsletter

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Executive Committee

The Honorable Melanie G. May
Acting Chair /Vice Chair, 4th DCA

Jennifer Grandal, Treasurer,
Statewide

The Honorable Michele Towbin-
Singer, Secretary, 17th Judicial Cir-
cuit

The Honorable Jeri B. Cohen
Past Chair, 11th Judicial Circuit

Eve Janocko, At-Large, 7th Judicial
Circuit

Jennifer L. Bassett, At-Large, 16th
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Audra Cohen, 11th Judicial Circuit

Kristin Pickens, 8th Judicial Circuit

Frank C. Rabbito, 11th Judicial Cir-

Dear FADCP Members:

2022 is here and we are all hard at work. The good news is the worst part of the pandemic appears to be over. I hope this newsletter finds you well.

I am excited to report we have a number of wonderful nominations for the board to energize our organization. The nominations committee is currently reviewing them to assure the best representation in discipline and geographical location for our State.

We will be hosting our next webinar on April 6, 2022, at noon. We are pleased to announce that Matthew Henderson, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Office of Statewide Intelligence, has agreed to present on the latest information on the prevalence and drug types affecting our state. This is sure to be an amazing presentation. Please mark your books accordingly.

We are also considering whether to hire an executive director that will be instrumental in organizing a statewide conference. This is something we used to do frequently, but has been missing for the last decade.

Our membership numbers have swelled thanks to your support. We currently have 141 members between individual and organizational memberships.

And last, I am happy to report the recognition of two of our members, who have recently received big job promotions that are so well deserved. Take a look at the articles on them inside.

Keep up the good work! You do make a difference!

Sincerely,

Acting Chair

“FADCP’s All Stars”

*By Melanie G. May
Fourth District Court of Appeal*



Jennifer Grandal, OSCA

Problem-solving courts thrive in Florida in large part due to the efforts of Jennifer Grandal and Eve Janocko, who were the some of the original Office of the State Courts Administrator (OSCA) staff assigned to drug courts in the 1990s. We simply would not be where we are without both of them.

Jennifer began her career with OSCA as an intern. She became employed with OSCA in 1997 and has risen through the ranks, serving as a court analyst, senior court analyst I and II, a court operations consultant, and senior court operations consultant. In January, 2022, she was promoted to the Chief of the Office of Problem-Solving Courts. This is not only an overdue recognition of her work, but also provides problem-solving courts with their own division. Congratulations Jennifer! Jennifer has been a member of the FADCP since its inception and has served as our treasurer for many years. Thank you Jennifer!



Eve Janocko,
Trial Court Administrator
Fourth Circuit

Eve began her problem-solving court career when she oversaw drug courts statewide in the early 1990s. She worked at OSCA for sixteen years and was involved in judicial certification, program policy development, and staffed supreme court committees. While there, the FADCP was enacted by statute in 2001. After her family moved to the Jacksonville area, Eve became the Executive Director of the FADCP from 2005 to 2015 until she accepted a position with the Fourth Circuit as chief deputy court administrator. She has remained an integral part of FADCP leadership. In October, she was appointed the Trial Court Administrator for the Fourth Circuit. Congratulations Eve!

JUDGE KELLY McKIBBEN CHRISTENS THE EIGHTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT'S EARLY CHILDHOOD COURT



Under the judicial leadership of the Honorable Kelly J. McKibben, Circuit 18 launched the opening of its new Early Childhood Court (ECC) on Valentine’s Day. The open house event was well attended in-person and virtually by many community partners and ECC team members. Judge McKibben spoke at the event highlighting the key intensive interventions offered through the ECC program and the need for this specialized program in Brevard County. “Even though the Early Childhood Court program is not new in Florida, it is new in Brevard County. We are excited that we will be joining over 27 other sites in Florida, offering more intense oversight and services to our local families and young children, in anticipation that they can be reunified in much less time if the parents and team members are fully invested in the program.” Judge McKibben.

ECC is a type of problem-solving court that addresses the root causes of dependency court involvement and focuses on utilizing the most effective solutions that promote long-term stability for the participants. In Florida, there are 27 active ECC courts and 5 sites actively working on implementing an ECC docket. The Safe Babies Court Team approach, which the ECC program is modeled after, is listed by the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare with a scientific rating of 3 signifying promising research evidence, high child welfare system relevance, and a child welfare outcome of permanency.

The ECC approach is not adversarial. ECC involves trauma-responsive court proceedings centered around therapeutic jurisprudence with a trauma-trained judicial leader committed to utilizing trauma-informed practices to improve the lives of young children and their families. ECC welcomes and encourages young children to attend court hearings with their parents and caregivers so the Judge may observe parents with their children and consider the child’s attachment relationships as well as the parents’ attunement to meeting their children’s needs. There is also a collaborative multidisciplinary court team, which provides the Judge with expertise on infant mental health and parent/child bonding and attachment. Judicial leadership is key in facilitating better outcomes for young children by improving court procedures.

Eighteenth Judicial Circuit's Early Childhood Court (continued)

Judge McKibben is a trauma-trained judicial leader with many years of experience in the dependency division and will now be the presiding judge of Brevard's new ECC. She is also the presiding judge for Brevard's Adult Drug Court, which is another type of problem-solving court utilizing trauma-responsive practices with participants opting to participate in a diversionary treatment program for substance abuse charges. With having trauma-informed experience and training, Judge McKibben is an ideal member of the judiciary to launch this new court program.

ECC is for children age three and younger under the court's jurisdiction with a pending dependency case due to allegations of parental child abuse and neglect. Families and caregivers of these young children are eligible to participate if one parent makes the decision to be involved. The ECC program is voluntary for parents. They must agree to participate and accept intensive services and judicial oversight. There are very few exclusionary criteria such as sexual abuse and extended incarceration that prevents parent involvement. The focus on infants and toddlers is based on the science of early brain development. In the first 1000 days of life the brain is evolving and making connections at a faster rate than any other time in a person's life. By age three, a child's brain has already completed 85% of its development. Birth to age three is a critical window of time to intervene and heal trauma. Child abuse impacts children's brain and overall development. The way early brain connections are made form the building blocks of self-regulation, cognitive functioning, educational capacities, attachments, and other important developmental milestones. Early intervention to these young children improves brain development and changes their lives for the better.

Florida's ECC program has 15 specific core components grounded in best practice standards with key evidence-based therapeutic interventions including child parent psychotherapy and circle of security parenting. Also, monthly family team meetings and monthly court hearings are critical components of the ECC program giving parents many opportunities to provide input. Circuit 18's ECC Community Coordinator is Dina Mezza. Her background is in law and social work with extensive experience working with families involved in child welfare and problem-solving courts. The Community Coordinator works at the agency level promoting systems improvement, acts as a neutral facilitator for family team meetings, and maintains the focus on the needs and well-being of the infants and toddlers involved in ECC. Monthly reviews serve as mechanisms to monitor and ensure service provision to promote healthy development. Parents are part of the ECC team working together to turn a difficult family situation into an opportunity to heal and thrive.



EARLY CHILDHOOD COURT



nurturing children



when it matters most



first 1000 days of life

THANK YOU TO OUR CORPORATE SPONSOR



We wish to recognize and thank SCRAM Systems for their Bronze Level Corporate Membership. SCRAM Systems support of the Florida Association of Drug Court Professionals will help our efforts to coordinate our next statewide training conference.

MEMBERS ONLY— WEBINAR ALERT

*By Judge Melanie G. May
Fourth District Court of Appeal*



Calling all FADCP Members! At noon on April 6, 2022, FADCP will host its next webinar on the Latest News on Drugs in Florida. It will be presented by Matthew Henderson, Florida Department of Law Enforcement. Learn the latest drug trends, how drugs are getting into our State, and what kinds of drugs you can expect to see in your drug courts. Be on the lookout for your zoom link. Presented to FADCP members only.

BE A CONTRIBUTOR To the FADCP Newsletter



We know lots of exciting things are happening in your drug courts and we want to hear about them. If you have a graduation, open a new problem-solving court, encounter some new obstacle, or stumble upon a successful idea in handling issues facing drug courts, our newsletter is a place to share. Please send any pictures and newsworthy items for inclusion in our next newsletter to Maymg@flcourts.org.

“Say Hello to Drug Court”

By *The Honorable Susan Alspector*
Seventeenth Judicial Circuit



“If nothing ever changed there would
be no butterflies”



Judge Susan Alspector
Broward County’s Sixth Drug Court Judge

I arrived in Felony Drug Court less than six months ago. I must admit, I didn’t know what to expect, other than that I had a team I was supposed to work with. Coming from a regular felony division, it took a little while to train myself to remember to even consult the rest of the Drug Court team. I wasn’t used to conferring with anyone about his or her opinion before making a decision. I was also uncomfortable with the “rah rah” attitude of Drug Court. We were to regularly applaud the small successes and milestones achieved by our participants. That doesn’t seem very judicial, I thought. At first, it felt artificial and contrived, and I wondered to myself if the participants were thinking: “Who is this person cheering me on? She doesn’t even know me.”

I figured that the more I knew about each participant, the greater the chance I would have to motivate each one. I began to ask questions to understand their life circumstances, challenges, and strengths. I came to remember the details of most of their lives: the 23-year-old man who had to take his mental health meds with applesauce; the 20-year-old young woman who worked at a gentlemen’s club and had lived in her car after escaping from an abusive relationship; the 25-year-old woman who just achieved a year sober and was taking care of her sister’s toddler son because the sister was in the throes of active addiction; and the names of the two participants who knew each other from middle school (she said that he was an airhead back then, too). I asked a lot of questions (and still do), and I admit that in the early days I took too long to get through my dockets. I tried to learn what motivates and what worries each participant. What challenges do they face at home or at work? Are either or both impediments to recovery? Are they afraid of change or holding reservations to use? Do they do better if they keep busy or does too much activity stress them out?

“Say Hello to Drug Court” *(continued)*

I have grown into a Drug Court Judge organically. My team has adapted to my style, and I am pretty confident that we all appreciate each other, professionally and personally. I have privately struggled at times with how to help my participants, wondering if the sanctions I imposed were too harsh or if they could realistically be effective in compelling change. I grew weary of having to sanction some of them repeatedly, but I remained resolute in my admonitions that treatment would work if they only hung in there and kept trying. I encouraged them and assured them they had the right stuff to succeed. I told them that they are worth it. If they relapsed, I displayed no angst or consternation. Instead, I casually picked them up and set them off on their way to try again. I refused to endorse feelings of shame. I wouldn't let them beat themselves up. As the weeks passed, something magical happened. The young man who couldn't stop using finally achieved negative UAs. The woman who kept missing group became an All Star. I now fist bump and whoop for and applaud each one, a sincere, heartfelt, “rah rah” cheering. I let each of them know I care, with a huge smile and some good-hearted teasing. I continue to ask questions, looking to find the key to unlock each one's courage, confidence, self-esteem, and motivation for change.

Now that I comfortably understand the routine functions inside the courtroom, I am working my way out into my community. I have applied for volunteer positions on boards and committees devoted to combating substance use disorder. I am working with my Drug Court Coordinator and Case Management Team to expand our treatment resources and ancillary services. I have begun to meet with providers, recovery residences, law enforcement, and faith and community leaders. Our community should be educated about the benefits of problem-solving courts. In the case of Drug Court, a participant can benefit not only from a felony dismissal, but also from science-based treatment and supervision to get well, hopefully permanently. I want to make certain our community learns about what Drug Court has done and will continue to do to change the lives of its participants and those whose lives they touch. You can't miss me. I will be the one wearing the big grin and holding a pair of pompoms.

Other News

National News

Supreme Court Shares Steps to Fight Record Overdoses

Court News Ohio | Jan. 27

On the heels of the state's deadliest year of overdoses in 2020, the Supreme Court of Ohio is leading the charge for local courts.

The Supreme Court's Specialized Docket Section produced a multi-faceted guide providing best practices for Ohio courts to combat the record-setting number of overdoses that have occurred amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The resource offers strategies for how courts can assist individuals dealing with addiction. The material was approved by the Commission on Specialized Dockets on Dec. 16.

"During this very challenging period, we must do everything we can to help those who come before our courts struggling with substance use issues," said Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor. "The Court's guide equips judges and their staffs with a series of options since there are so many different paths to recovery."

Image is a chart titled Unintentional Overdose Death and shows a line of steadily increasing numbers from 2011 to 2017 with a drop in 2018 and another incline in 2019 and 2020

According to the Ohio Department of Health, nearly 5,200 Ohioans died from an overdose in 2020. That was up 24% from the year prior, with 81% of those cases involving fentanyl. Unintentional overdoses appeared to be on the decline from the peak of 5,006 in 2017. To illustrate the general rise in fatal overdoses in Ohio over the past decade, there were 1,822 in 2011.

The Court is highlighting a four-part approach to treating those who enter the justice system with substance use concerns.



National Association of Drug Court Professionals

[NADCP 2022 Annual Conference](#)

NADCP's 29Th Annual Drug Court Training Conference

Location: Nashville, Tennessee

Dates: July 25-28, 2022

NADCP provides training to over 6,000 treatment court professionals annually at its national conference – the largest training conference in the nation addressing substance abuse and mental health disorders in the justice system. RISE21 is specifically tailored to enhance the skills, leadership, and training of the treatment court team with approximately 180 cutting-edge sessions, opportunities to connect and learn from colleagues around the world. You will come away educated and energized! RISE21 offers courses for the new practitioner and team members who have been in the field for years. The sessions will be a blend of providing what to watch for now and in the future and practical ways to implement these concerns at a minimal cost. The focus will be on the highest risk areas given how stretched our resources are.



The OSCA has scheduled the following webinars on the topics you asked for through a Bureau of Justice Assistance Grant to provide training and technical assistance to Florida's adult drug courts on the Florida Adult Drug Court Best Practice Standards. The educational content being provided in the upcoming webinars will be valuable for other problem-solving courts. Relevant webinars are also being offered through the Florida Courts Opioid and Stimulant Initiative including replays from past webinars. Please take advantage of these educational opportunities!

**Upcoming Webinars for Adult Drug Courts and Other
Problem-Solving Courts**

<https://www.flcourts.org/Resources-Services/Problem-Solving-Courts/Upcoming-Events>

**Florida Courts Opioid and Stimulant Initiative Upcoming Webinars
and Event Replays**

<https://www.flcourts.org/Resources-Services/Problem-Solving-Courts/Opioid-Stimulants-Initiative>

FADCP SNIPPETS



FADCP MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Always Open



We look forward to you joining or renewing your FADCP membership. We encourage drug court team members to become FADCP members. The FADCP welcomes your input as we look forward to supporting you and your drug courts and other problem-solving courts. Your membership supports our statewide association - - the voice of Florida's problem-solving courts.

Visit the [FADCP Website](#) for more information on initiatives and training opportunities.