

**For Immediate Release
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**Supreme Court Task Force on Criminal Justice and Mental Health
Releases Interim Report**

The frequency with which people with mental illnesses enter our criminal justice system and their handling within that system are critical issues across the nation and in Delaware. In an effort to better understand and address the issue of criminal justice involved individuals with mental illnesses, the Delaware Supreme Court formed the Task Force on Criminal Justice and Mental Health in September 2008.

Chaired by the Honorable Henry duPont Ridgely, the Task Force has brought together judges, state leaders, legislators and nonprofit organizations to develop ways to improve outcomes for people with mental illnesses engaged with the criminal justice system. The Task Force's Interim Report, which details current Task Force projects and includes a list of preliminary recommendations, is now available online at:

<http://courts.delaware.gov/AOC/Mental%20Health%20Task%20Force/?InterimReport.pdf>

“This Task Force is greatly enhancing our understanding of the problems that individuals with mental illnesses face, enabling us to encourage inter-agency cooperation, identify specific gaps in resources, including improvements to treatment options, as well as steps to take, when appropriate, to help individuals with mental illnesses avoid contact with the criminal justice system,” said Justice Ridgely.

The ongoing work of the Task Force is supported by a grant from the Judge's Criminal Justice Leadership Initiative. The Task Force also receives technical assistance from the Council of State Governments Justice Center and the National GAINS Center. Over the course of 2009, the Task Force will continue to work to develop a strategic plan to improve responses to people with mental illnesses involved in the criminal justice system.

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