

# Autism and Dependency Court Regional Summits Educate and Train Dependency Court Personnel and Partners



Spearheaded by Supreme Court Justice **Kevin Dougherty** on behalf of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, two regional summits were recently held in the northeast and central regions on Autism 101, diagnosis and community support to educate and train local courthouse personnel, child welfare professionals and dependency court partners, including juvenile and adult probation and other community providers.

“Education and awareness are critical to ensuring we are providing for the needs of all Dependency Court users, especially those with autism,” Justice Dougherty said. “The more we learn, the more we grow as a system and as a community, but most importantly in our ability to be part of the type of positive change that will impact Pennsylvania families.”

Over 500 attendees, representing 60 different organizations from 25 counties, including local children and youth, courthouse personnel, law enforcement, schools and community service providers, were present between the two locations.

The regional summits are part of a five-county, effort to expand locally on the work that the statewide Autism and Dependency Court taskforce has undertaken.

With nearly one in 44 children and one in 56 adults\* diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), judges are sure to have individuals living with autism come before

them. The primary goal of the Autism and Dependency Court Taskforce is to provide a positive dependency court experience for children and parents with ASD by increasing professional awareness and responsiveness.

The planning committee for the regional summits included:

- Lead Dependency Judge, Judge **Ryan Tira**, Lycoming County
- Children and Youth Administrator, Matthew Salvatori, Lycoming County
- President Judge **Michael Sholley**, Snyder and Union Counties
- Children and Youth Administrator, Jennifer Napp-Evans, Snyder County
- Children and Youth Administrator, Matt Erst, Union County
- Lead Dependency Judge, Judge **Jennifer Rogers**, Luzerne County
- Children and Youth Administrator, Kerry Browning, Lackawanna County
- Director, **Sandra Moore**, Office of Children and Families in the Courts
- Judicial Analyst, **Jennifer Doyle**, Office of Children and Families in the Courts ▲

**more information**

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