



Fall 2024

## **Leading Change: Improving Illinois Courts' Response to Mental Illness and Co-Occurring Substance Use Disorders**

Greetings and welcome to the Fall 2024 Edition of Behavioral Health, the Bench, and Beyond. One year ago in October 2023, pursuant to direction from the Illinois Supreme Court, the Special Supreme Court Advisory Committee for Justice and Mental Health Planning announced its role as steward of the Illinois Courts' [Leading Change: Improving Illinois Courts' Response to Mental Illness and Co-Occurring Substance Use Disorders](#) initiative.

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## **Courts as conveners and leaders**

Many mental health and justice professionals have noted that the system that manages both competence to stand trial (CST) evaluation and competence restoration (CR) processes in criminal cases is in crisis. As courts and mental health authorities across the nation face increasing numbers of cases involving the competence of defendants, system improvements and reforms have emerged as a national priority.

Acknowledging the Illinois CST/CR system has room for improvement, with support from the Illinois Supreme Court, the Special Advisory Committee for Justice and Mental Health Planning's Competency and Education Subcommittees planned and hosted "*Rethinking the Intersection of Competency to Stand Trial, Competency Restoration, and Mental Health Systems.*"

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## **External funding support to Lead Change**

External funding support to *Lead Change* may be found at local, state, and/or federal levels. The Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts is fortunate to have developed and obtained several new pathways to funding in support of Mental Health Action Plan strategic initiatives.

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## Leading Change: Training and technical assistance

Training and technical assistance can be described as the planning, development, and delivery of activities designed to achieve specific learning objectives, resolve problems, and foster the application of innovative approaches.

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## Resource: The Promise of 988

The Illinois Department of Human Services/Division of Mental Health launched 988, a three-digit dialing code for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline on July 16, 2022.

“For criminal justice stakeholders, 988 is an important opportunity to shift people in crisis toward appropriate care and ideally minimize contact with law enforcement and the justice system. To fully take advantage of this, however, criminal justice partners need to be aware of what 988 provides and prepare processes to appropriately direct people to 988 prior to contact with law enforcement and through to reentry.” (Council of State Governments)

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*For more information or comments, please contact Scott Block,  
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