

Hughes Center Online Panel to Explore Impact of Mental Illness on Legal System

For immediate release with photos

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Galloway, N.J. — New Jersey Supreme Court Justice Lee Solomon will join national and local experts to discuss the impact of mental illness on the courts and criminal justice system in an April 16 online panel. It will be sponsored by the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University.

The two-hour panel, “Responses to the Mental Health Crisis in the Justice System,” will consider related issues affecting the courts with perspectives from both sides of the bench. The free virtual event will be held from 3 to 5 p.m. and be available on the [Hughes Center’s website](#) and [YouTube channel](#). A video recording of the program will be archived on the center’s website.

“Too often, people with serious mental illnesses end up in jail rather than in treatment. And the stress of working within the criminal justice system can affect the wellness of judges, lawyers, prosecutors and law enforcement,” said John Froomjian, director of the Hughes Center. “Our event will examine multiple aspects of mental illness and the system and explore best practices.”

Solomon, a Camden County resident sworn in as an associate justice of the N.J. State Supreme Court in June 2014, is chair of the court’s Committee on Wellness and the Law. He will lead off the presentations by discussing initiatives to combat threats to wellness in the legal community.

Other panel presenters will include:

- Judge Nan Waller, Multnomah County Circuit Judge in Portland, Oregon, who presides over a mental health court and competency docket. She is a recipient of the William H. Rehnquist Award for Judicial Excellence.
- James Bianco, judge of the Superior Court of Los Angeles, who presides over a full-time mental health courtroom and works with an innovative diversion program that provides housing and treatment to mental health patients who wind up in the criminal justice system.
- Retired Recovery Court Judge Mark Sandson, currently vice chair of the New Jersey Judiciary Opportunities for Building Success (JOBS) program that provides workforce development and employment at a living wage with benefits for the state’s 130,000 probation clients.

- Judge Michael Blee, assignment judge for the Atlantic-Cape May County Vicinage of the N.J. Superior Court and a member of the Judiciary's Wellness Committee.
- Blee and Sandson will present with Iyana James, associate director of Justice Involved Services at Jewish Family Services of Atlantic County, who will provide a practitioner's perspective.
- The program will be moderated by retired Assignment Judge Julio Mendez, a senior contributing analyst for the Hughes Center.

This panel is the latest in a series of Hughes Center events exploring law-related issues or providing information and resources about and for the legal community. Past programs have covered judicial safety, New Jersey's Daniel's Law and First Amendment issues.

The Hughes Center has also cosponsored Continuing Legal Education (CLE) training and Stockton University Constitution Day programming. To learn more or to view archived program videos, visit stockton.edu/hughes-center/events.html.

About the Hughes Center

The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University serves as a catalyst for research, analysis and innovative policy solutions on the economic, social and cultural issues facing New Jersey, and promotes the civic life of New Jersey through engagement, education and research. The center is named for the late William J. Hughes, whose distinguished career includes service in the U.S. House of Representatives, Ambassador to Panama and as a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Stockton. The Hughes Center can be found on YouTube, and can be followed on Facebook @StocktonHughesCenter and X @hughescenter.

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the beach and Boardwalk in Atlantic City. The university offers more than 160 undergraduate and graduate programs. Learn more at stockton.edu.