

JUDGE STEVEN LEIFMAN

Biography

Judge Steve Leifman is the Associate Administrative Judge of the Miami-Dade County Court – Criminal Division. From 2007 to 2010, Judge Leifman served as Special Advisor on Criminal Justice and Mental Health for the Supreme Court of Florida. In this capacity, Judge Leifman was responsible for chairing the Court’s Mental Health Subcommittee which authored a groundbreaking report entitled, *Transforming Florida’s Mental Health System*.¹ This report, which has received considerable state and national recognition, outlines recommendations for redesigning services, systems, and financing strategies with the goal of decreasing inappropriate and costly involvement of people with mental illnesses in the justice system by increasing access to comprehensive and cost-efficient community-based services that target specialized treatment needs.

From 2010 to 2018, Judge Leifman chaired the Florida Supreme Court’s Task Force on Substance Abuse and Mental Health Issues in the Court. He currently chairs the newly created Steering Committee on Problem Solving Courts for the Supreme Court of Florida and the Mental Health Committee for the Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida. As a result of Judge Leifman’s work, Miami-Dade County has seen significant reductions in arrests and recidivism rates among individuals with mental illnesses, the burden of providing psychiatric services through the jail has been eased, and the county is saving millions of dollars annually.

Due to his expertise in the areas of criminal justice and mental health, Judge Leifman has been appointed to serve in a variety of capacities on local, state, and national bodies, including Co-Chair of the Council of State Governments/TAPA Center for Jail Diversion Judges’ Criminal Justice/Mental Health Leadership Initiative, Co-Chair of the Miami-Dade County Mayor’s Mental Health Task Force, Board of Directors of the American Psychiatric Association Foundation, Board of Directors of the Corporation for Supportive Housing, member of the National Leadership Forum for Behavioral Health and Criminal Justice Services, member of the American Bar Association Task Force on Criminal Justice Mental Health Standards, Co-Chair of the American Bar Association Criminal Justice Mental Health Committee, Co-Chair of the Florida Bar Mental Health Committee and a Voluntary Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Miami School of Medicine. In addition, Judge Leifman serves as Chair of the South Florida Behavioral Health Network and Finance Chair of the Miami-Dade Homeless Trust. He is also the past Board Chair of Florida Partners in Crisis.

Judge Leifman received the 2015 William H. Rehnquist Award for Judicial Excellence. One of the nation’s highest judicial honors presented by Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr., the Rehnquist Award is presented annually to a state court judge who exemplifies judicial excellence, integrity, fairness, and professional ethics. Judge Leifman is also the first recipient to receive the Florida Supreme Court Chief Justice Award for Judicial Excellence (2015). More recently, Judge Leifman was awarded the 2018 Pardes Humanitarian Prize in Mental Health and he was named by New Times as one of Miami-Dade’s most interesting people of 2017. He also was also named

¹ Available at: http://www.floridasupremecourt.org/pub_info/documents/11-14-2007_Mental_Health_Report.pdf

a 2016 Governing Magazine Public Official of the Year. One of eight honorees, the award recognizes governmental leaders who exemplify the ideals of public service.

Judge Leifman has been featured in many national and local television programs, radio programs and articles regarding mental health and the criminal justice system including, The New England Journal of Medicine, the Atlantic Magazine, CBS News, USA Today, CNN: Anderson Cooper Special Report, CNN: Special Investigations Unit: The Criminally Insane, NBC Nightly News, PBS: Minds on the Edge, Facing Mental Illness, NPR: All Things Considered, New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal; Governing Magazine, the Samantha Bee Show on TBS, CBS4: The Forgotten Floor, WPLG- TV10: This Week in South Florida, WPBT2 South Florida PBS, Miami Herald and Miami Today. He has also authored and published numerous articles and book chapters on mental illnesses and the criminal justice system.