

JUDGE STEVEN LEIFMAN

Biography

From 2007 – 2010, Miami-Dade County Judge Steve 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 ground-breaking report entitled, *Transforming Florida’s Mental Health System*. This report, which has received considerable state and national recognition, outlines recommendations with the goal of decreasing inappropriate and costly involvement of people with mental illnesses in the justice system. Since October, 2010 Judge Leifman has chaired the Florida Supreme Court’s Task Force on Substance Abuse and Mental Health Issues in the Court.

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, 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, 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.

In recognition of his tireless efforts, Judge Leifman has received numerous awards including; the 2015 William H. Rehnquist Award for Judicial Excellence. One of the nation’s highest judicial honors, the Rehnquist Award is presented annually to a state court judge who exemplifies judicial excellence, integrity, fairness, and professional ethics. Chief Justice of the United States John G. Roberts Jr. presented the award to Judge Leifman during a ceremony at the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, D.C. on November 19, 2015.

Judge Leifman is also the first recipient to receive the Florida Supreme Court Chief Justice Award for Judicial Excellence (2015). Presented by the Chief Justice of the Florida Supreme Court, this prestigious award honors a state trial court judges who exemplify judicial excellence, including strength of character, integrity, fairness, open-mindedness, knowledge of the law, sound judgment, professional ethics, intellectual courage, compassion, and decisiveness.

More recently, Judge Leifman was named 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.

In addition, Judge Leifman was the first recipient of the 2016 Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry (GAP) “Dear Abby Award,” the 2016 Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce Henry M. Flagler Community Builder Award, the 2016 Spanish American League Against Discrimination “Sense of Community Award,” a 2014 American Psychiatric Association

Presidential Commendation, the 2014 Spero Award from Weill Cornell Medical College, the Dade County Bar Association 2014 Justice Louis Brandeis Award, the 2014 Lawyers To The Rescue Humanitarian Award, the Dade County Bar Association 2013 Criminal Justice Award, the Brain & Behavior Research Foundation 2012 Productive Lives Award, the Society of Biological Psychiatry 2012 Humanitarian Award, the American Psychiatric Association 2012 Advocacy Award, the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce 2012 Miami's Leaders Award, the 2011 Miami-Dade State Attorney Katherine Fernandez-Rundle Award and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) 2008 Distinguished Service Award (NAMI National's Highest Honor).

Judge Leifman has also 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.