

## **PA. MED-MAL FILINGS SLIGHTLY UP FROM 2010, STILL WAY DOWN SINCE RULES CHANGES**

BY JOHN O'BRIEN

HARRISBURG, Pa. (Legal Newsline) - A six-year decline in the amount of medical malpractice lawsuits filed in Pennsylvania stopped in 2011.

Figures released Monday showed a slight increase in med-mal lawsuits from 2010 to 2011, though overall there is a 44.1 percent decline from the years of 2000-2002.

"What we're seeing is essentially a leveling off in what had been a growing decline in numbers that is not surprising," state Supreme Court Chief Justice Ronald D. Castille said.

"Although the numbers are likely to show slight changes in the years ahead, the pattern suggests a solid footing for the systematic tracking and rule changes initiated and instituted a decade ago by the Supreme Court to address concern over medical malpractice litigation."

In 2003, the court made two changes to the procedures for filing med-mal lawsuits. The first required attorneys to obtain a certificate of merit from a medical professional that showed the conduct in question fell outside acceptable professional standards.

The second change required med-mal cases to be brought only in the county where the cause of action took place.

The Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts collects data from each of Pennsylvania's 67 counties. Its research showed that 2011 had the fewest number of jury verdicts in comparison to earlier years, and that 70 percent of verdicts were for the defense.

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