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PRESS ADVISORY

**Local Mental Health Advocate Named Magistrate Judge,
Will Chair the Mental Health Commission and preside over the Juvenile
Behavioral Diversion Program**

- WHAT:** Installation Ceremony for Magistrate Judge Gretchen N. Rohr
- WHEN:** Friday, January 4 at 4:00 pm
- WHERE:** Moultrie Courthouse – Courtroom 301
500 Indiana Avenue, NW, DC
- WHO:** Chief Judge Satterfield, Superior Court of the District of Columbia
Avis Buchanan, Director, Public Defender Service of the District of Columbia
Associate Judge Michael Ryan, Associate Judge, Superior Court of the District
of Columbia

Biography:

Gretchen Naomi Rohr was appointed Magistrate Judge and Chair of the Mental Health Commission by Chief Judge Lee Satterfield on October 25, 2012.

Magistrate Judge Rohr graduated from Macalester College in 1998, where she received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and Communications. As a Rhodes Scholar, she earned her first law degree from Oxford University in England with a concentration on International Human Rights. After representing a collective of widows on matters of family law and constitutional rights, she returned to the U.S. to complete a J.D. at Georgetown University Law Center. At GULC, she was selected as a Public Interest Law Scholar for her academic achievement and commitment to public interest.

Prior to her installation, Magistrate Judge Rohr served for five years as the Director of the DC Jail and Prison Advocacy Project for University Legal Services where she represented criminal-justice involved men, women and youth with mental disabilities. She designed an interdisciplinary initiative for diverting these individuals from behind bars into community-based, self-directed treatment. The Project crafted new reentry practices in federal prisons and administered the city's first initiative transitioning chronically homeless people out of the DC Jail and into their own apartments with wrap-around supports. Under Judge Rohr's leadership,

this work has been nationally recognized as an innovative model by advocates and administrators alike. She has lectured extensively across the country on topics including disability law compliance in criminal justice settings, employing peers as reentry specialists and enhancing community and institutional safety through crisis intervention and trauma response.

Prior to her practice in DC, she was a staff attorney with the Georgia Advocacy Office, representing individuals with psychiatric disabilities seeking release from hospitalization, access to community-based alternatives and protection against institutional abuse, neglect and sexual violence. For two years, Judge Rohr worked as a Holland & Knight LLP *Chesterfield Smith Fellow*, where she worked in partnership with the Atlanta-based Southern Center for Human Rights litigating constitutional rights cases in prisons. At the fellowship's conclusion, she continued with the firm, balancing a governmental and business relations practice with pro bono work enforcing the federal consent orders from her litigation in Alabama's prisons.

Magistrate Judge Rohr has previously served as the Co-Chair of the Individual Rights and Responsibilities Section of the American Bar Association's Criminal Justice Committee and on the Board of Directors for several charitable organizations in the District and abroad. Her current civic commitments include teaching as an Adjunct Faculty member at Georgetown University Law Center as well as facilitating mindfulness and meditation practice in underserved communities.

Judge Rohr continues to serve as an active member of the DC Jail Diversion Task Force, an interagency working group chaired by Judge Michael Ryan which addresses problems relating to people with mental illnesses in the criminal justice system. Her expertise and commitment to consensus-building have helped the DC Superior Court access effective behavioral health resources and have supported the integrity and fair functioning of the adult mental health and juvenile behavioral courts since their inception.

Judge Rohr will serve as Chair of the Superior Court's Commission on Mental Health and will preside over the Juvenile Behavioral Diversion Program.

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