



**MINNESOTA
JUDICIAL
BRANCH**

First Judicial District

Mission: To provide justice through a system that assures equal access for the fair and timely resolution of cases and controversies.

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The First Judicial District has 36 judges and more than 250 staff that handle nearly 120,000 cases annually in the counties of Carver, Dakota, Goodhue, Le Sueur, McLeod, Scott and Sibley.

The First Edition

A Newsletter about the First Judicial District of the State of Minnesota

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Le Sueur County Drug Court Receives Full Approval from the Minnesota Judicial Council

By Miranda Rosa, Le Sueur County Drug Court Coordinator



Judge Mark Vandelist

On Monday, February 9, 2015, the culmination of a yearlong planning process took place and the Le Sueur County Drug Court held its first drug court hearing. Drug Court is a specialized court docket that targets criminal defendants who have alcohol and drug addiction issues, giving them the support,

structure and accountability they need to be successful.

Drug Courts have been in existence for twenty-five years, with the implementation of the first drug court in Miami Dade County in 1989. Since then nearly 3,000 drug courts and other types of specialty courts have opened across the country, because study after study has proven that drug courts reduce crime, promote recovery, reunite families and save money.

When the Honorable Mark Vandelist assumed the bench in January 2014 he quickly recognized the need for such a program in Le Sueur County and gathered a group of stakeholders to begin the

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planning process. Over the next year this group developed a team for the drug court and did preliminary work on policies. Out of this process the Le Sueur County Drug Court decided on its model and the types of cases it would take. The drug court operates on a post-plea basis, accepting non-violent felony offenders who are at a high risk for recidivism and have high treatment needs – those who are addicted to alcohol and drugs.

During this planning process the drug court team applied for and received approval for the Drug Court Implementation training process through the National Drug Court Institute. Le Sueur County’s Board of

Commissioners agreed to pay for a year of operating expenses for the program. This allowed the drug court to hire a coordinator, one already operating a drug court in rural Minnesota, whose first job was to apply for federal funds for the drug court. The Drug Court Initiative, a subcommittee of Judicial Council, gave Le Sueur County’s drug court an initial approval on a pilot program basis until it completed the implementation training.

On May 1, 2015, the three-day implementation training was complete. On May 13, 2015, Le Sueur County’s Drug Court received preliminary approval from the Drug Court Initiative. Finally, on June 25, 2015 the

Le Sueur County Drug Court received full approval from the Judicial Council.

With the influx of methamphetamine from Mexico, controlled substance crime in the county went up almost 100% in 2013 and 2014 over the previous three years. The need for a program like drug court in Le Sueur County is evident. As of June 22, Le Sueur County’s drug court already has nine participants and several pending referrals.

For more information on the benefits of drug courts, please read [New Study Shows Long-Lasting Impact of Minnesota’s Drug Courts](#).

Judge Terrence Conkel Re-Elected Chief Judge of First Judicial District



Chief Judge Terrence E. Conkel

The Honorable Terrence E. Conkel will continue to serve as Chief Judge of Minnesota’s First Judicial District, after being re-elected for a second two-year term by his fellow judges on the First District bench. Chief Judge Conkel has been a judge in the First Judicial District since 1998, and has served as Chief Judge since 2013. He is chambered in the McLeod County Courthouse in Glencoe.

In addition, the Honorable Kathryn D. Messerich was re-elected as Assistant Chief Judge of the First Judicial District, and will also serve another two-year term in that position. Assistant Chief Judge Messerich was first appointed to the bench in 2004, and has served as Assistant Chief Judge since 2013. Judge Messerich’s chambers are located in the Dakota County

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Chief Judge Terrence Conkel (Continued from page 2)

Courthouse in Hastings.

A more detailed profile and a photo of Chief Judge Conkel can be found [here](#) and a profile and photo of Assistant Chief Judge Messerich can be found [here](#).

By statute, the chief judge of a judicial district exercises general administrative authority over the courts within the judicial district, including assigning judges to serve in locations throughout the district. Chief

judges and assistant chief judges are elected to two-year terms by judges within the district. New terms began on July 1, 2015.

Pilot Program Fast Tracks Some Civil Cases in Dakota County, Duluth

Early study finds select cases are being resolved or going to trial faster because of Expedited Litigation Track

By Stephen Montemayor, Star Tribune

The committee behind a pilot program seeking to speed up the time it takes to try simpler civil cases in Dakota County and Duluth recently recommended expanding the program to other state courthouses.

The Expedited Litigation Track (ELT) began in July 2013 in the First and Sixth Judicial Districts with the aim of getting certain civil cases to settlement or trial at a faster pace.

An April report to the Minnesota Supreme Court found that such cases in Dakota County reached disposition 12 days faster than non-ELT cases in the program's first nine months. Those that went to trial did so 46 days quicker, the report said.

"What we found after being in the process for awhile was we as a court do a pretty good job of getting cases to trial within a reasonable period of time," said Justice Christopher Dietzen, who is serving as a liaison to the state's civil justice

reform task force.

In Dakota County and Duluth, the ELT applies to select cases - like personal injury, consumer credit or contract disputes - that are not considered complex. Half of Dakota County's cases were assigned to the program and the others became part of a comparison group.

To speed up the process, parties meet in a mandatory early case management conference within the first 45 to 60 days of the case's filing. There, a judge sets scheduling deadlines for discovery or motions to be filed and a specific trial date to be held within four to six months.

Dietzen said early results suggest a reduction in delays often caused by the discovery process or the filing of continuances.

"If you can cut back on those, what you end up doing is cutting time to disposition and reducing the cost of litigation," Dietzen said.

Dakota County District Judge Jerome Abrams,

who is supervising the First Judicial District's program, said the ELT can make it easier for people to find lawyers for civil cases that may not offer big financial payout. For instance, he said, more small-business owners or people with relatively small injury claims will have better access to the court system.

"The doors have been opened up," he said.

Abrams was also on the task force that recommended the program in 2011. In the ELT's first nine months, more than 300 cases were assigned to the program - 213 in Dakota County.

"This wasn't something brought about because of a hue and cry from the community," Abrams said. "This is based on us in the court system taking our own initiative to see what we can do to improve civil justice and what can we do to have civil justice be cost-effective."



Judge Michael Mayer Receives A.L. Carlisle Child Advocacy Award



L to R: Richard Gardell, Chair Minnesota Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee, Judge Michael Mayer, Carrie Wasley, Juvenile Justice Specialist for State of Minnesota

Judge Michael Mayer received the A. L. Carlisle Child Advocacy Award from the Coalition of Juvenile Justice (CJJ) in recognition of Mayer's work championing for youth with courage, compassion and commitment. It was presented at the CJJ Annual Conference in Washington D.C., June 10-12, 2015.

The CJJ's A.L. Carlisle Award is presented annually by CJJ to an individual who makes outstanding

contributions to youth, the improvement of juvenile justice, and in the broader area of juvenile justice and delinquency prevention. This award is named in honor of A.L. Carlisle, CJJ's founding force. She was a volunteer activist who strived to ensure that the nation's most troubled and vulnerable children would have secure futures. She served as the first CJJ National Chair and Northeast Regional Chair from 1979 through 1987.

Judge Mayer is a Juvenile Court Judge in the First Judicial District. He has served as a member of the Minnesota Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (State Advisory Group) since being appointed by Governor Arne Carlson in 1995. He has served as the Chair of the SAG and presently serves as Vice Chair. He also sits on the CJJ Executive Board as Chair of the Midwest Region.

Karen Henke, a veteran juvenile prosecutor, in her letter supporting Judge Mayer, said "I have always respected his dedication to see justice and to reach children...his compassion is palpable in court." Linda Hayes, a former CCJ board member and past recipient of the A.L. Carlisle Award, describes Judge Mayer as, "always [using] great judgment in his decisions. [He is] willing to ponder the points, hear everyone else's thoughts, and then come to the best decision for children."

In 2009, Judge Mayer and the Minnesota State Advisory Group convinced legislators to pass a statewide

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Judge Michael Mayer (continued from page 4)



L to R: Judge Michael Mayer, wife Shannon Mayer, daughters Claire and Meghan Mayer

disproportionate minority contact policy. In 2014, they convened a forum on incarcerated youth sentencing practices and the need to make changes to state law. The forum resulted in a statewide push for the elimination of juvenile life in prison without the possibility of parole.

In addition to his duties on the bench, Judge Mayer chairs the Eliminating Racial Disparities Committee for the Juvenile Court and sits on the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) Executive Committee. He served as the Chair of the Juvenile Court Process Committee in an effort to streamline the

court process to get children and families in and out of court as quickly as possible. Judge Mayer serves on the Board of Tree House, an organization aimed at helping at-risk youth and youth who are suffering from mental health and chemical dependency issues.

In 2013 Judge Mayer was appointed to the CAP Board for Dakota, Carver and Scott Counties. CAP (Community Action Partnership) runs the Headstart programs, handles energy assistance grants, established a program for senior meals and offers housing for low income families.

Judge Mayer is an active member of Easter Lutheran Church, where he serves as a mentor for youth in the confirmation process. He gives presentations to his congregation and community about the consequences of juvenile records and young people who are involved in the juvenile justice system.

Carrie Wasley, the Juvenile Justice Specialist for Minnesota, says, "Mike has always been accessible to everyone and this attribute is particularly critical when dealing with youth. He is more than approachable [and] he has the ability to sit down and relate to kids [who tend to] open up to him, trust him, and are willing to listen to him. He talks to them in their language and looks them in the eye when speaking to them. [His] guiding light is the desire to do what is best and fair for the children impacted by his decisions."

The Coalition for Juvenile Justice is a nationwide coalition of State Advisory Groups (SAGs) and allies dedicated to preventing children and youth from becoming involved in the courts and upholding the highest standards of care

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Judge Michael Mayer (continued from page 5)

when youth are charged with wrongdoing and enter the justice system. CJJ envisions a nation where fewer children are at risk of delinquency; and if they are at risk or involved with the justice system, they and their families receive every possible opportunity to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives.

Mayer was appointed as a First Judicial District Judge in 2004 by Governor Tim Pawlenty. He was a partner with the Eagan law firm of Grannis and Hauge, practicing there from 1989 to 2004. Previously, he was an associate attorney with the South St. Paul law firm of

Grannis, Grannis, Farrell and Knutson from 1986 to 1989, and an associate attorney with the Eagan law firm of Hauge, Eide and Keller from 1985 to 1986. Mayer earned his Juris Doctorate from Hamline University School of Law in St. Paul in 1985, and his Bachelor of Arts degree with honors from St. Mary's University in Winona in 1981.



CJJ's substantive areas of work include:

- Promoting evidence-informed policies and practices in delinquency reduction and prevention;
- Educating the public and advising federal policymakers on state and local juvenile justice issues;
- Assisting the states (including territories and the District of Columbia) in meeting the core requirements of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act;
- Improving racial/ethnic fairness, accessibility, and overall quality of community and court-based policies and practices; and
- Linking national, state, and local advocates and organizations to pursue a common mission.

eFiling Mandatory for Attorneys, Agencies, GALs in 11 Pilot Counties on July 1

Beginning July 1, 2015, attorneys, government agencies, and guardians ad litem are required to electronically file and serve documents in all court cases filed in the 11 eCourtMN pilot counties. This includes all cases filed in Cass, Clay, Cook, Dakota, Faribault, Hennepin, Kandiyohi, Lake, Morrison, Ramsey, and Washington counties.

On July 1, 2016, those same filers will be required to electronically file and serve documents in all district court cases statewide.

Expanding the availability and mandatory use of the eFile and eServe system is a major milestone in the Minnesota Judicial Branch's eCourtMN initiative, which is transforming the

state's court system by replacing paper-based court files with an electronic information environment. The goal of the eCourtMN initiative - which received a 2014 State Government Innovation Award from the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs - is to make the state's court system more accessible, more efficient, and more convenient for court customers.

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eFiling (Continued from page 6)

One of the key elements of the eCourtMN initiative is giving case participants the ability to submit documents to the court and serve documents to opposing parties electronically, through an online portal. This allows court customers to file documents without traveling to the courthouse or paying for postage or courier costs, allows filers to submit documents immediately and outside of courthouse business hours, and allows court documents to be sent to filers electronically.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch began pilot testing eFiling and eService in 2012, and today attorneys and government agencies are able to eFile and eServe in 11 pilot counties, though use of the system is optional in several case types.

Other court filers - such as self-represented litigants and medical examiners - will be able to begin eFiling in the 11 pilot counties on July 1, 2015, and in other counties as eFiling becomes available. These filers will be able to choose whether to file on paper or through the eFile and eServe system, though Court Rules require that once a filer has used the eFile and eServe system to file a document, he or she must use the eFile and eServe system for all future documents filed in that case.

In order to help attorneys, government agencies, and guardians ad litem prepare for mandatory eFiling and eService, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has posted informational resources, training materials,

and a three-step guide to starting eFiling at <http://www.mncourts.gov/eFile>. Training on how to use the eFile and eServe system is available through live and recorded webinars, and in-person at some locations. More information on training available to filers, including details on how to register for online or in-person training, is available at <http://www.mncourts.gov/File-a-Case/File-in-A-District-Trial-Court.aspx>.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch also operates a support center for filers with questions about the eFile and eServe system. The eFile Support Center is staffed Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and can be reached at 651-227-2002, 1-855-291-8246, or by e-mail via the Minnesota Judicial Branch [website](#).

eFiling Timeline

In April, the Minnesota Supreme Court adopted amendments to the Minnesota Rules of Court that provided a timeline for a statewide expansion of eFiling and eService to all 87 Minnesota counties:

- **July 1, 2015:** Use of the eFile and eServe system will become mandatory for attorneys, government agencies, and guardians ad litem in all court cases filed in the 11 eCourtMN pilot counties.
- **End of 2015:** By the end of 2015, the Minnesota Judicial Branch is aiming to make eFiling and eService available in the remaining 76 counties. Use of the eFile and eServe system for cases filed in those counties will be voluntary upon implementation. More information on when eFiling and eService will be available in the non-pilot counties will be provided in the future.
- **July 1, 2016:** Use of the eFile and eServe system will become mandatory for attorneys, government agencies, and guardians ad litem in all district court cases statewide.



20 Years of Domestic Violence Awareness

By Heather Ahern, Goodhue County Senior Court Clerk

Among the 70% of women who have experienced domestic violence and told someone about it, more than half (58%) said that no one helped them. Only 47% of men experiencing domestic violence report telling someone about it, and with good reason. Of the men who did tell someone, 87% reported that no one helped them.

www.nomore.org

64% of Americans say if we talk more about domestic violence and sexual assault, it would make it easier to help someone (www.nomore.org). That is what the First Judicial District Domestic Violence Coordinating Council is doing.

This year marks the 20th Annual Domestic Violence Conference. Each year the First District Domestic Violence Coordinating Council invites justice partners to attend a training with nationally known speakers about a topic that the judicial system is all too familiar with – violence in the home.

In 1996 the first conference was held with Michael Paymar as the presenter on the topic of a Coordinated Community

Response. Since that first conference, the themes have varied to keep up with the trends of our time. Conference topics have included Child Witnesses to Domestic Violence, Stalking and Technology, Probation Against Violence, Working Towards Ending Men's Violence Against Women, Bullies to Batterers, Sexual Exploitation, and Diversity.

Coordinating a conference that draws about one hundred attendees is a huge undertaking for the council. Made up of members of from all areas of the justice system including judges, law enforcement, attorneys, probation, advocates and court personnel, the committee typically has a core group of less than ten members who get the job done. The group traditionally meets every other month to work on the annual conference, network and problem-solve. We have also taken on projects over the years such as sending out a jail survey to find out how each county handles monitoring contact from perpetrators to victims while incarcerated. We have seen a system that continues to strive for

accessible victim services and accountability in domestic violence crimes with such changes as Domestic Abuse No Contact Orders, 50 year Orders for Protection and fee waivers in Harassment Restraining Orders that are crime based instead of just fee based.

Working with domestic violence victims can be a frustrating part of the job from dealing with the repeat offender to seeing a victim wanting a no-contact order or protective order dismissed. Our conference strives not only to educate system providers but to rejuvenate empathy for victims at the same time. We hope to provide answers and discussion to the difficult topics such as: what are barriers that keep victims in domestic violence relationships, what the system can do to help stop domestic violence, how batterers can be held accountable and change their behavior. If you can walk away with a renewed sense that you can make a difference in whatever line of work you do for the justice system, then we have done our jobs!

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Domestic Violence (Continued from page 8)

The 20th Annual Domestic Violence Conference will be held on October 2, 2015 from 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. in Prior Lake at the Wilds Golf Course. Presenters will be Annika Bartos and Shane Moe from Life Development Resources speaking about Domestic Violence in the Veterans Culture: Integrating the Warrior into Society. Also

Eva Wood from Outfront Minnesota will speak about intimate partner violence in the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender and Queer Community: Creating and Sustaining LGBTQ inclusion. We will also hear from several men who participate in a batterers program and aftercare support group, and a survivor of domestic abuse.

Cost for the conference is \$75 which includes lunch. CLE's and POST credits are available as well. If you are interested in attending the conference, wish to be on our mailing list, or would like to join the council, please email us at firstdistrictdvcouncil@gmail.com.

Mary Stapleton Receives First Judicial District Amicus Curiae Award



Mary Stapleton and Chief Judge Terrence Conkel

The First Judicial District presented its fifth annual Amicus Curiae Award to Mary Stapleton on June 11, 2015. The Amicus

Curiae Award, meaning Friend of the Court, is an annual recognition of persons who have provided exceptional service, leadership or other contributions to assist the courts in the First Judicial District discharge their constitutional responsibility for the administration of justice. Mary Stapleton was nominated by First District Judges Kevin Eide, Janet Cain, Michael Wentzell and Eric Braaten for her exemplary volunteer work on behalf of children and families.

Mary Stapleton was a volunteer guardian ad litem from 1994-2003 and a contract guardian ad litem from 2003-2010. For the last five years (since 2010) she

has been an unpaid volunteer for the guardian ad litem program. Mary has volunteered literally thousands of hours



L to R: Judge Eric Braaten, Mary Stapleton, Judge Michael Wentzell, Judge Janet Cain

serving and advocating for the best interests of children. She is a member of the Carver

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Mary Stapleton (Continued from page 9)

County Children’s Justice Initiative Committee (CJI) and has been a member since 2001 when the CJI Committee was formed as part of a pilot program with the Minnesota Supreme Court. Mary is an active member and faithfully attends CJI meetings and conferences with the team. She is a strong and compassionate voice for children who often cannot advocate for themselves. Mary has made deep connections with the

children she advocates for and the families she works with and has made a lasting impact on their lives. In addition, she has also served as a citizen volunteer for the Carver County Justice Advisory Committee. Mary is an active community volunteer. She is member and Past President of the local chapter of Minnesota League of Woman Voters, member of the Chaska Historical Society, Past Chairman of the Chaska Park and Recreation Board, and Past Member of

the Chaska Planning Commission. Mary is also a very active volunteer in the local educational community and her church.

Past recipients of the Amicus Curiae Award are: Liz Reppe, Dana McKenzie, Merlyn Meinerts, Mary Freyberg, the law firm of Lindquist & Vennum, Sharon Freiling, Karissa Richardson, Dan Beeson, Wayne Jagow, Lloyd Moosbrugger, Bob Morris, and Jerome Wickert.

Minnesota Judicial Branch Launches Redesigned Website

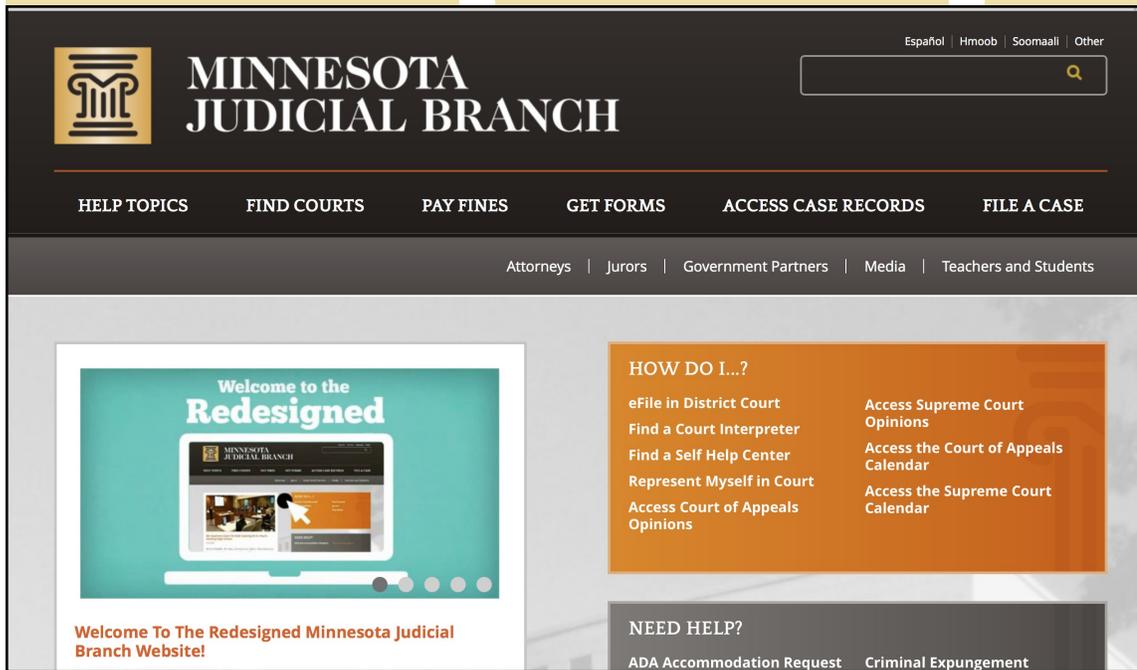
Each day, approximately 20,000 users visit the Minnesota Judicial Branch

website, www.mncourts.gov, to find court-related information, access case

records, electronically file court documents, and pay fines for traffic

tickets and citations. In an effort to improve the usability and navigation of this important public resource – with a focus

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Redesigned Website (Continued from page 10)

on providing site visitors quick access to the tools, resources, and information they most frequently utilize – the Minnesota Judicial Branch today announced the

launch of a redesigned www.mncourts.gov.

For new and returning site users looking to better understand the new site layout

and features, the new www.mncourts.gov homepage provides a link to a short video describing highlights of the site redesign. **These highlights include:**



- **Improved navigation:** One of the primary goals of the redesigned website is to make it as easy as possible for users to quickly find the resources and information they are looking for on the site. To accomplish this, the redesigned website features a cleaner homepage, improved organization, and a persistent header and footer that provide one-click access to the site's most frequently used pages and tools. The site also features specialized pages for some of the site's most frequent visitors: attorneys, jurors, government partners, the media, teachers, and students.
- **Expanded help for court users:** The redesigned website features an expanded array of Help Topics to help users with questions about the Minnesota Judicial Branch, or people who are representing themselves in court. Help Topics range from information on specific types of court proceedings (such as Adoption or Divorce), to help for court users (such as how to electronically file court documents), to information about the Judicial Branch (such as specific courts and court programs). Individual Help Topics provide an overview of the topic, answers to frequently asked questions, links to related court forms and procedures, applicable rules and laws, helpful links and resources, and related videos.
- **Mobile-friendly design:** Responding to the growing use of mobile devices by website visitors, the Minnesota Judicial Branch's redesigned website features a mobile-friendly (or "responsive") design. This means that the site will automatically adjust to best fit the type and size of device a visitor is using to access the site.

What site users need to know:

- **Existing tools and resources will remain:** The redesigned website continues to provide access to the same tools and resources users have come to expect from the Minnesota Judicial Branch website. This includes access to appellate court opinions, the online court fine payment system, the eFile and eServe system, and online access to certain district and appellate court case records.
- **E-mail notice subscriptions will transfer:** The Minnesota Judicial Branch website gives users the ability to sign up for e-mail notifications related to public notices, court news, appellate court calendars and opinions, and other important information. Users who are currently subscribed to receive these public notices will continue to receive notices from the redesigned site. New users will be able to sign up for subscriptions directly from the www.mncourts.gov homepage.
- **Many URLs have changed:** While the website address (URL) www.mncourts.gov remains the same, links to many subpages and documents have changed. For three months, many URLs from the old site will redirect to pages on the redesigned site, but users should update links and bookmarks to the Minnesota Judicial Branch website by the end of September 2015.

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