Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report
January - December 2017

State Court Administrator’s Office
25 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Saint Paul, MN 55155
THE COMMITTEE FOR EQUALITY AND JUSTICE

An advisory committee to the Minnesota Judicial Council, the Committee for Equality and Justice (CEJ) is comprised of 26 members who are representatives from each of the 10 judicial district Equal Justice committees (EJCs), as well as judicial officers, attorneys, court employees, and members of the public. The Committee is reflective of the state’s geographic and demographic diversity.

The goals and initiatives of the CEJ have been incorporated into the Minnesota Judicial Branch Strategic Plan for the current biennium.

Committee for Equality and Justice Mission:
“To work collaboratively across the Judicial Branch to advance efforts to eliminate bias from court operations, promote equal access to the court, and inspire a high level of trust and public confidence in the Minnesota Judicial Branch.”

The Committee for Equality and Justice meets quarterly to accomplish this mission through the Committee’s charge of:
• Recommending diversity and inclusion education programs and course materials for judges and Judicial Branch employees;
• Promoting diversity and inclusion in Judicial Branch employment and in appointments to Judicial Branch committees and boards to reflect the population served by the Judicial Branch;
• Making recommendations for improvement in court processes, procedures, and policies as they relate to race, gender, ethnicity, age, disability, socioeconomic status, religion, sexual orientation, and any other status protected by law; and
• Assisting district Equal Justice committees in their work at the local level, and providing assistance in outreach efforts to the communities they serve.

MINNESOTA JUDICIAL BRANCH VISION

The general public and those who use the court system will refer to it as accessible, fair, consistent, responsive, free of discrimination, independent, and well-managed.

MINNESOTA JUDICIAL BRANCH MISSION

To provide justice through a system that assures equal access for the fair and timely resolution of cases and controversies.
NATIONAL CONSORTIUM ON RACIAL AND ETHNIC FAIRNESS IN THE COURTS

The National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts met for their 29th annual conference, May 15-17, 2017, in St. Louis, MO. The conference theme for this year was “Gateway to Justice: Out of the Fire and Into the Future.”

The National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts is the oldest and largest national entity devoted to enhancing racial, ethnic, and language access in the state courts.

Committee for Equality and Justice and Equal Justice committee members attend the conference to share best practices from other state courts, build connections, and increase their knowledge concerning justice issues and trends from across the country.

STRATEGIC GOALS AND SUBCOMMITTEES

In addition to quarterly meetings of the full Committee for Equality and Justice, four subcommittees have been formed to accomplish each of the Committee’s strategic goals for FY18-19:

- Race Bias Data Subcommittee
- Diversity Recruitment Subcommittee
- Diversity and Inclusion Education Subcommittee
- Community Outreach Subcommittee

EQUAL JUSTICE COMMITTEES

Equal Justice committees (EJCs) exist to advance equality and promote multicultural understanding and competency among judicial officers, court employees, and local justice system partners. EJCs work in collaboration with the Committee for Equality and Justice, and are active in each of the 10 judicial districts across the state. They are comprised of judicial officers, court employees, law enforcement, attorneys, and community members and community organizations who meet frequently on local access to justice topics. Each Equal Justice committee has a representative who serves on the Committee for Equality and Justice.
RACE DATA COLLECTION
Judicial districts across the state have worked to increase their race data collection rates by: explaining to defendants how the data will be used; involving judicial officers in making the requests for the race data form in court; and coordinating with public defenders, defense attorneys, and bailiffs to help collect race data forms. Defendants are informed that the data is collected to ensure fair and unbiased treatment equally and used in statewide initiatives such as the Pretrial Release Project.

The Committee for Equality and Justice, along with the State Court Administrator’s Court Services Division, worked to review Judicial Branch race-related and other relevant bias-related data and made recommendations for improvement in court processes, procedures, and policies.

EDUCATION POLICY
Participating in diversity and inclusion training helps ensure that judicial officers and employees have the necessary tools to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse society. These skills can help to achieve the goal of promoting public trust, public confidence, and greater access to justice for all court users.

The Committee for Equality and Justice made a recommendation to the Judicial Council to add diversity and inclusion education requirements to the Minnesota Judicial Branch Education Policy, resulting in one hour of such education per year for all judicial officers and employees. This was approved effective July 1, 2017.

COURT INTERPRETER SURVEY
The Committee for Equality and Justice has worked in conjunction with the Court Interpreter Program to develop and implement a customer service satisfaction survey of court users who have interacted with a court interpreter.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH
Over the past year, various Equal Justice committees hosted community dialogues and listening sessions to build connections with community members and gather court user recommendations.

Holding discussions between those inside and outside of the courts helps to build trust and public confidence.

The Committee for Equality and Justice has assisted district Equal Justice committees (EJCs) in their work at the local level, and provides assistance in outreach efforts to the communities they serve.

The various recommendations, issues, and topics that have transpired from these discussions can be found in the Community Dialogue reports on the Committee for Equality and Justice public website.
FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT
Carver, Dakota, Goodhue, Le Sueur, McLeod, Scott, and Sibley Counties

The First Judicial District hosted two community dialogues at the Apple Valley Service Center in Dakota County on April 22, 2017, and October 25, 2017. The purpose of the dialogues was for the public to share ideas and concerns related to the court system with judges, including ideas for improving the court system.

Two judges from the First Judicial District participated in a Hispanic-Latino Social Responsibility and Innovation lab at Henry Sibley High School. The event was sponsored by the Mission Impact Council, YMCA, Youthprise, United Way, and ISD 197. Youth, parents, the school district, law enforcement, and community leaders worked to explore and design new opportunities in the areas of youth development, cultural identity, and employability, as well as to develop a working plan for the community. The courts received powerful feedback regarding the interaction between community members and the courts and the impact that cultural perceptions and misperceptions can have.

SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT
Ramsey County

More than 120 people attended the Second Judicial District’s Community Dialogue on October 11, 2017. The location of the event was credited for the successful turnout. The Amherst Wilder Foundation in Saint Paul was deliberately chosen as a venue because it is at the intersection of the Summit-University, Frogtown, and Rondo neighborhoods. Seventeen judges, the Second Judicial District Interpreter’s Office, and representatives from the County Attorney’s Office, the Public Defender’s Office, the City Attorney’s Office, Community Corrections, and the Sheriff’s Office also attended the event.

The Second Judicial District Bench also toured the Dorothy Day Center, a local community agency that works to solve poverty, create opportunity, and advocate for justice in the community.

THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT
Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, Wabasha, Waseca, and Winona Counties

The Third District Equal Justice Committee (EJC), in collaboration with the Diversity Council of Rochester, held a FUSE (Fun and Unique Social Encounter) event on June 6, 2017. The purpose of the session was to build relationships with diverse populations in Olmsted County and to allow for more open communication on what the courts can do to better understand court users’ experiences.

A representative from the Diversity Council of Rochester arranged for a meeting between the Third District Equal Justice Committee, the Diversity Council, and a pastor of a predominately African American church in Rochester to plan to seek input from community members on what the Equal Justice Committee can do to better connect with the community.
FOURTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Hennepin County

The Fourth Judicial District took part in various community outreach events in 2017, including:

- Two separate “Understanding Housing Court” workshops with Pillsbury United Communities: 1) With a focus on the experience of Somali community members in partnership with Brian Coyle Community Center and; 2) For both service professionals and community members at the Oak Park Center.
- The “Necessity of Interrupting Implicit Bias in the Courtroom,” sponsored by Hennepin County District Court, the Hennepin County Bar Association, and the Anne W. Grande Law Library.
- A presentation for participants of the New Americans Academy in St. Louis Park on how to find court information.
- A panel discussion on “A View From the Defendant’s Chair,” which covered issues that defendants from diverse backgrounds tend to experience in the suburban courts.
- Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center (UROC) “Train-the-Trainer Expungement Workshop,” which informed 75 professionals about the Hennepin-specific expungement process.
- The Family Court Enhancement Project co-hosted the “Tell It To The Judge – Listening Session” with the Division of Indian Work and the Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center (MIWRC).

FIFTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Blue Earth, Brown County, Cottonwood, Faribault, Jackson County, Lincoln, Lyon, Martin, Murray, Nicollet, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Rock, and Watonwan Counties

The Fifth Judicial District Equal Justice Committee conducted a Community Dialogue with a focus on the Karen and Burmese communities on March 5, 2017, at the West Learning Center in Worthington, Minnesota. The purpose of the event was to hear from community members, as well as to help community members gain an understanding of how the judicial system works and its function. Topics discussed included immigration, law enforcement, and family law issues.

The Equal Justice Committee also participated in Somali informational meetings in the Mankato area regarding ICE and other concerns of the Somali community. Several members of the Judicial District are part of the Tapestry Project in Mankato, which works to integrate immigrants into the area.

FOURTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION EDUCATION

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SIXTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Carlton, Cook, Lake, and St. Louis Counties

The Sixth Judicial District participated in various education and outreach activities throughout 2017:

- Sixth Judicial District judges shared a meal with guests at the Damiano Center in Duluth, a community center that provides essential services to individuals and families in need.
- The Sixth District Bench and managers attended a presentation by Karen Diver, former Chairperson of the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa and former Special Assistant to the President for Indian Affairs in the Obama White House.
- Co-Sponsored the “We Are All Criminals” event held in Duluth in September, which catalyzed conversations about crime, privilege, punishment, and second chances.
- Arrowhead Regional Corrections (ARC) presented the findings from its “Adult Recidivism Report” to the Equal Justice (EJC). The EJC discussed disproportionate minority contact, the effect of implicit bias on the length of probation or early discharge, and whether the Domestic Abuse Intervention programming is culturally competent.
- Members of the EJC attended presentations by Judge LaJune Lange reflecting on her experiences as a judicial representative, especially with challenges around Native and African American youth in the criminal justice system.

SEVENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Becker, Benton, Clay, Douglas, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Otter Tail, Stearns, Todd, and Wadena Counties

The Seventh Judicial District invited representatives from the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe’s Health and Human Services and legal aid departments to jointly undergo drug treatment court training with representatives of the county.

The Mille Lacs County courts worked on following up with individuals when jury summons are sent out to help achieve appropriately diverse jury pools. This process stemmed from not seeing a proportional number of Native Americans on the juries, despite a nearby reservation with a large Ojibwe population.

EIGHTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Big Stone, Chippewa, Grant, Kandiyohi, Lac qui Parle, Meeker, Pope, Renville, Stevens, Swift, Traverse, Wilkin, and Yellow Medicine Counties

The Eighth Judicial District Equal Justice Committee held a Community Dialogue with a focus on the Somali community on April 22, 2017, at the Willmar Public Library. Attendees expressed concerns in an informal setting and received a DVD of the video, “Going to Court in Minnesota,” to help provide multilingual information.
The Ninth Judicial District Equal Justice Committee held a Community Dialogue in partnership with the White Earth Nation on August 22, 2017, at the White Earth Tribal and Community College. The purpose of the session was to provide outreach to the district’s diverse communities and population, to allow the public to meet judges and share ideas about improving the courts, and to give judges the opportunity to listen to personal experiences of members of the public. An estimated 32 people attended the session, which began with a ceremony in the Ojibwe language in the Drum Room. This helped to set a positive and respectful tone for the evening, which was accompanied by the sharing of a meal prepared by staff of the tribal college.

Other accomplishments of the District:
* The Itasca County/Leech Lake Wellness Court was recognized with a Humphrey School of Public Affairs’ Local Government Innovation Award on December 7, 2017. The award recognizes innovative ways that local governments in Minnesota have responded to rising costs, reduced revenues, and increasing demand for public services.
* A judge and a court administrator are part of a committee that includes officials from the White Earth Tribal Court that is seeking the construction of a jail in Mahnomen County.
* The judicial district administrator and human resources manager met with leadership from the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe about possible ways to include more tribal members in the jury pool.
* Two judges continue to participate on the State Court/Tribal Court Forum.
* A state court judge and a tribal court judge were selected as a state judge/tribal judge team to attend the National Judicial Institute on Domestic Child Sex Trafficking taking place in 2018.

The Tenth Judicial District Equal Justice Committee held a Community Dialogue on January 31, 2017, at the Fridley Community Center, with a focus on racial bias and law enforcement. The event took place in partnership with the Fridley schools, the Chief of Police, and other community groups. Some of the concerns expressed were lack of knowledge of the courts, bias, and access. Another major concern was the absence of a centrally-located courthouse in Anoka County, as had once been in the past.

The Tenth District also hosted a Law Day event on April 28, 2017, which included participation from three local schools. The event provided individuals with information about the justice system, and included an all-day family clinic and allowed attendees to meet with the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV).
EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES
Providing opportunities for Minnesota Judicial Branch employees and judicial officers to learn more about diversity and inclusion-related topics helps equip them with the best customer service skills and helps to foster public trust and confidence.

Educational offerings are made possible via quarterly “Why Diversity Matters” sessions, “Cultural Perspectives” courses, court education days, judicial education events, and through continuing legal education (CLE) courses.

CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES
“Cultural Perspectives“ sessions take place four times a year and focus on various historical, cultural, and societal issues from various communities. The live, 90-minute webinars generally attract 200-300 attendees from within the Judicial Branch.

Topics in 2017 included:
- Understanding Court Users from the Somali Community
- Understanding Generations for Greater Effectiveness
- Working Effectively in a World with Poverty and ‘isms
- Implicit Bias - Its Impact and How the Courts Can Counter It

ADDITIONAL EMPLOYEE EDUCATION
Through continuing education on-demand course offerings, court employees gain valuable information about serving court users who are limited-English proficient, as well as how to best assist court users who have a disability.
**LANGUAGE ACCESS RESOURCES**

The Minnesota Judicial Branch provides Language Access Basic Training (LABT) for court employees. The tools and resources provided help employees assist court users who are limited-English proficient. Topics include:

- Language Access Plans and Resources
- Court Interpreter Program Resources
- Court Interpreter Program Tools

**AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT RESOURCES**

Training on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for judicial officers and employees is also provided to help the courts provide assistance for court users who have a disability.

The [Minnesota Judicial Branch ADA public website](http://www.mncourts.gov) contains information, tools, and forms (electronic and paper) to help court users in requesting an ADA accommodation. This website also provides information for the public on the local ADA contact at each court location if questions arise or to make an accommodation request.

**STATE LAW LIBRARY CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION (CLE) EVENTS**

The Minnesota State Law Library conducts several live CLE events related to diversity and inclusion. Courses offered in 2017:

- Understanding Immigration: Where We Are, How We Got Here, and the Impact on Minnesota’s Justice System
- RAV v. St. Paul: Its History and Legacy
- What Might Have Been: The Bumpy History of Gender Equality Under the Constitution
- Working Effectively with Muslims
- Lena O. Smith, a Minnesota Civil Rights Pioneer

**DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION INTRANET SITE**

The Minnesota Judicial Branch Diversity and Inclusion intranet serves as a repository for information on events and educational resources for judicial officers and court employees, including:

- Training and education
- A calendar of events and holidays
- Resource links to various groups and cultures
- The Minnesota Judicial Branch’s diversity statement
- Access to diversity and inclusion resources

**MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF COURT MANAGEMENT**

The Minnesota Association of Court Management Conference included a session on Racial Equity in Government – History & Application at its annual conference, which took place October 4-6, 2017.

“Our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and the test of our civilization.”
— Mahatma Gandhi
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

To help learn and share best practices, build relationships with community members and organizations, increase cultural competency, and gain greater understanding of others, the Minnesota Judicial Branch participates in the groups and committees listed here.

TWIN CITIES DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ROUNDTABLE (TCDIR)

Representatives from a variety of public, private, and non-profit employers comprise the Twin Cities Diversity and Inclusion Roundtable. Practitioners from these various industries share knowledge and tools with each other on relevant workforce diversity matters and meet every other month.

COMMUNITY GROUPS AND EVENTS

In 2017, members of the Fourth Judicial District Equal Justice Committee and District leaders participated in the following community events and groups:

- The Action Research Team for Hennepin Community Engagement
- Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE)
- Make It. MSP. Retention of Professionals of Color
- Hennepin Community Engagement Community of Practice
- Minneapolis Urban League Black History Month Pancake Breakfast
- Philando Castile Listening Session
- White Earth Urban Picnic
- National Night Out block parties

ALLIANCE FOR COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION IN EMPLOYMENT STATE SERVICES (ACCESS)

The Minnesota Judicial Branch is a part of the ACCESS workgroup of state employees, which is charged with creating and maintaining diversity and equal opportunity best practices to achieve the goal of recruiting, hiring, developing, and retaining a diverse workforce. Employees are dedicated to advancing the diversity and inclusion efforts of the statewide agencies led by Minnesota Management and Budget.

THE FORUM ON WORKPLACE INCLUSION

The Forum on Workplace Inclusion challenges participants to learn and grow through facilitated dialogue, structured networking, and experiential learning. Attendees from across the country, from around the globe, and from the Judicial Branch gain cutting edge tools to become responsive leaders equipped for advancing diversity and inclusion in the workplace.
HUMAN RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT RECRUITMENT
The Human Resources and Development Division of the Minnesota Judicial Branch launched a new recruitment strategic plan this year to help promote recruitment efforts on a statewide level. The courts are working on ways to employ a workforce representing the populations we serve. Efforts taking place include developing collaborative relationships with candidates through existing forums such as schools, community groups, and other established and informal forums. Leveraging local human resources and court leadership in networking opportunities will also be key.

RECRUITMENT
The Minnesota Judicial Branch is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion in employment and in appointments to committees and boards to reflect the population served by the Judicial Branch.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch participated in the following career fairs in 2017:
- American Indian OIC Career Fair (2)
- Hmong Resource Fair
- Leech Lake Tribal College Career Fair
- Minnesota Private College Job and Internship Fair
- People of Color Career Fair (2)
- Rochester Post Career Fair
- State of Minnesota Career Fair
- University of Minnesota Job and Internship Fair

The Equal Justice committees have been intentional about sharing Judicial Branch recruitment brochures at the statewide community dialogues and in other community engagement events.

The Judicial Branch also sends open job postings to the Workforce Community email listserv through the State of Minnesota, which reaches more than 500 diversity contacts.

STATE DEMOGRAPHIC DATA
The Minnesota Compass and data from the state demographer provide the Minnesota Judicial Branch with a wealth of knowledge on changing demographics using data from the U.S. Census and the American Communities Survey. These sources provide key information to help inform the courts on the changing region, the workforce, and community populations.

STATE LAW LIBRARY MATERIALS
Judicial Branch employees and judicial officers have access to scholarly journals through the Diversity Bibliography and are notified of articles via a listserv. The State Law Library prepares and updates a list of diversity and inclusion publications each year. This source also contains links to information on other diversity and inclusion resources.
**BUILDING THE PIPELINE: A FOCUS ON YOUTH**

Members of the Third Judicial District Equal Justice Committee visited Rochester High School career classes and shared their career paths with the hope of inspiring high school students to pursue careers in the legal field.

Fourth Judicial District staff spoke with 30 graduating seniors about careers in the courts at the 22nd Annual Diversity Career Resource and Education Expo event, hosted by the Minnesota Spokesman Recorder. The goal of the event was to overcome large achievement and employment gaps by providing educational and professional resources to students of color in the Twin Cities.

Nearly 20 young people from the North and N.E. YMCA youth programs spent a day at Hennepin County District Court to participate in a variety of activities, including a speed networking event with judges and court staff, observing a court trial, and taking a tour of the court facility. This “Y the Courts” event was intended for youth in YMCA programs with identified interests in learning more about how the courts operate and the different career opportunities available.

A group of 12 students from the South High AVID Program spent an afternoon learning about various facets of the court system. The students toured the Hennepin County Sheriff's forensic lab and a courtroom, met with a judge to learn about the path to becoming a judge, and had lunch with the deputy district administrator to learn about the role of the courts.

Several judges hosted more than 30 high school freshmen and sophomores from Ubah Medical Academy, who visited Hennepin County District Court during their citizenship class. Students observed a felony revocations calendar, learned about the jury office, and toured the courthouse.

**INTERNSHIPS**

To help build a pipeline of future court employees, the Fourth Judicial District conducts a summer internship program that includes 10 college students. Other districts also host student workers and interns.

**YOUTH GROUPS**

Judicial officers and employees often speak about careers to groups from K-12 schools, YMCA’s Youth in Government, the Girl Scouts, and others to plant seeds to inspire youth to think about a career with the Minnesota Judicial Branch, and to share the wide variety of career options within the courts.

With questions about this report or other diversity-related matters, please contact: Melanie Larsen Sinouthasy, SCAO Human Resources Diversity Specialist and Coordinator for the Committee for Equality & Justice.

For more information visit: [www.mncourts.gov/cej](http://www.mncourts.gov/cej)