

COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

October 26, 2013

Seventh and Tenth Judicial District's Equal Justice Committees

On a warm and sunny mid-autumn Saturday morning members of central Minnesota's Somali community met at the Whitney Senior Center in Saint Cloud, Minnesota for a listening session with local representatives of the judicial system.



[from left to right] Abdikarim Ahmed (*Interpreter/Legal Assistant, Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid*), Judge Leonard Weiler (*Mille Lacs County, Seventh District Equal Justice Committee Chair*), Imam Mahamed Nuh Dahir (*Islamic Center of St. Cloud*), Judge Bill Ekstrum (*Washington County, Tenth District Equal Justice Committee Chair*)

photo supplied by Dan DeBaun, News Reporter, WJON radio

Community Dialogue

Seventh and Tenth District Report

INTRODUCTION

Demographics are rapidly changing in Minnesota. Communities and systems need to evolve in order to adapt to the developing needs of the State. One recent change has been the entry of Somali people into both urban and rural areas of Minnesota and the impact of this influx on all aspects of the judicial system – from law enforcement and social services to courtroom hearings. This listening session was an opportunity for representatives of the judicial system to listen to the concerns of the Somali community and continue efforts for improved communications.

Community Dialogue Plan

The Community Dialogue Plan was developed in 2007 by a planning subcommittee of the Racial Fairness Committee. Since 2010, goals of that committee have been carried forward by the Minnesota Judicial Branch's Committee for Equality and Justice. The Plan provides a template for each judicial district's Equal Justice Committee to work toward the equitable treatment of all individuals in the court system. The Community Dialogue Plan's stated purpose is to create a public forum for community members to describe their experiences and discuss ideas for advancing racial fairness in the courts.

Seventh and Tenth District Session Details

Three groups, the Saint Cloud Whitney Senior Center and the Equal Justice Committees of the Seventh and Tenth Judicial Districts, co-hosted this listening session. The Tenth Judicial District, is comprised of eight counties encircling the north, east and west boundaries of the metro area. The ten counties of the Seventh Judicial District border the northwest edge of the Tenth Judicial District and extend westward to the North Dakota border. Both Equal Justice Committees partnered with the Somali Community in all aspects of the listening session.

The Whitney Senior Center is managed by the City of St. Cloud and is located in the main building of a former municipal airport. The Whitney Center is well known among the members of the local Somali community as they were the site for Somali English as a second language classes and employment training in past years. The adjacent Whitney Recreational Center has been rented by members of the area's Somali community to host large group events such as Eid celebrations and Ramadan prayer gatherings.

SUMMARY OF THE LISTENING SESSION

Most of the Somali people now living in Minnesota arrived since 1992. They left Somalia because of civil unrest fraught with violence. Many spent an extended period in refugee camps in other African nations before emigrating to the United States. Upon arrival many Somalis initially settled in other areas of the U.S. before relocating to Minnesota. They came to Minnesota after hearing reports from initial settlers of employment opportunities and hospitality.¹ While some Somalis have lived in Minnesota since the early 1990's, others have arrived from other states or from Africa, as recently as within the past few months.

It is estimated that more than 32,000 Somalis now live in Minnesota. Approximately 12,000 Somalis live in central Minnesota, and they generally in the area following



Interstate 94 northwest from the Twin Cities metropolitan area.² This area involves counties in both the eastern Seventh and western Tenth Judicial Districts. Minnesota has the largest population of Somali people living outside of the east African nation of Somalia. The median age of a Somali-Minnesotan is 25 years, as compared to 37 years for the general Minnesota population.

In 2012 the chairs of the Seventh and Tenth District's Equal Justice Committees agreed to jointly host a Community Dialogue Session to better understand the concerns of the area's Somali residents. A planning committee was formed early in 2013. All planning committee meetings were conducted as teleconferences. Somali organizations and individuals were actively engaged in order to gain the support of Somali community leaders. Efforts were made to address differences in culture including setting the event date after Ramadan ended, planning the event to fit within the daily Muslim prayer schedule, serving a traditional Somali meal, and having separate rooms for men and women for the small group discussions.

¹ [Somalis in Minnesota](#) (People Of Minnesota series) by Ahmed Ismail Yusuf (paperback) Minnesota Historical Society Press; 1 edition (December 15, 2012)

² These population estimates are disputed, some estimates indicate there are 50,000 or more Somalis in Minnesota. *Somalis in Minnesota*, increasing the cultural competence of health care providers serving diverse populations, Information Sheet,, 01/12 UCare, Stratis Health, www.stratishealth.org

Central Minnesota's Somali residents live and work throughout the region. St. Cloud was selected as the event site because it is where most of the Somali-related agencies, businesses and the primary mosque are located. Having the judicial districts jointly host the event with the Whitney Senior Center reduced the facility rental expense. The event facility was reserved in June. The planning committee expected transportation challenges to be a likely obstacle to attendance for some Somalis. Fortunately, the Whitney Senior Center is on the St. Cloud bus line, which operates hourly on weekend days. The Whitney Center's staff proved extremely adept in meeting the event's changing needs for set-up and space accommodations. Event needs were frequently anticipated and met the Center's staff before realized by most planning committee members.

Event invitations to judicial system partners were sent by mail and email at the end of the summer and continued thereafter. Press releases were emailed to local media. The St. Cloud Times newspaper printed an event announcement in early October. Somali Radio, an on-line service of St. Cloud State University, attended the event as did a reporter from KJON, the local AM radio station. Outreach to the Somali residents began in early September. A joint letter was sent by the judicial committees to the Imam of the Islamic Center of St. Cloud seeking his support and participation. Flyers and registration information were distributed to city offices and to Somali community service agencies and businesses. One planning committee member spent two weekdays on a St. Cloud "walkabout" going to offices, agencies, businesses and the mosque to personally request the attendance of Somali community members. All of these organizations were asked to promote the event on their website and in social media. In retrospect, it appears that word of mouth about the session as shared by the Somalis in the community was the best publicity to share information about the event.

The plan was to register Somali attendees by telephone or email. Formal registration of members of the Somali community proved difficult. By early October fewer than ten community members were registered. A few persons registered by phone after the stated deadline and immediately before the event date. During the walkabout the community's leaders indicated that fifteen, twenty or thirty persons were coming from their agency or office, but they declined to provide a list of names or other identifiers. Assurances were made that



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these people were not duplicates of persons on another list, and that each one was certain to attend. On the day of the event 204 members of the Somali community had been informally registered in this manner. As a “best guess” the caterer was asked to provide luncheon food for 130 people.



Hands Across the World is a St. Cloud non-profit agency that offers English as a second language lessons and training to provide basic living skills for immigrant adults and children. The program director welcomed the event invitation. She encouraged all students to

attend - regardless of their country of origin. Many students, Somalis, Sudanese, Kenyan, Vietnamese and Spanish speaking, attended the session as an opportunity to observe and share in an event sponsored by the judicial system. An estimated sixty to seventy Somalis attended the listening session. On the event date the planning committee was informed that many registrants were unable to attend because of two conflicting community mandatory attendance activities that had been scheduled at the last minute.

The structure of the judicial system is based on calendars, schedules and documentation. Thirty-seven members of the judicial system and about ten members of the community (often judicial system family members) attended. The judicial system participants were ready to greet the Somali community at 9:00 a.m. when registration for Somali attendees started. The first Somali registrants appeared ten minutes later and continued to trickle in over the next hour. This, and a delay in the arrival of the caterer, extended the event by approximately fifteen to thirty minutes. While Muslims adhere to strict daily prayer schedules and a full calendar of religious days, the personal schedule for many Somali Minnesotans is less structured.



The event planners expected that some men and some women would want to go to small group sessions in separate segregated rooms, with others accepting a community (mixed-

gender) setting. No one selected the community room option resulting in overcrowding of the men's small group discussion room. However, in a post-event survey, all responders reported that the small group discussions were lively, thoughtful and helpful in generating a sense of sharing.



The scheduling delays allowed additional time for informal discussions. One judge reported afterwards that “ '[B]reaking bread' together was also a valuable means of connecting as human beings and achieving a comfort level

between the community members and the court officials.” The caterer agreed to provide meals at a lower price per person than charged in his café as a measure of his support for the event. The Equal Justice Committees have no operating budget.

However, the districts agreed that Community Dialogue Session was a worthwhile use of general funds. The planning committee agreed that it was more appropriate to spend the available



funding on a shared meal instead of professional interpreters. Volunteer interpreters from the assembled Somali community were used. While many Somalis frustration with the interpretation services provided in the community; there were no negative comments were made about the Somali interpretation services at the listening session.

Two requests of event planners went unmet by the districts: child care and transportation. The planners recognized these as possible obstacles for attendance by Somalis, but found the committees were not able to meet these needs.



An email sharing the news of these requests was sent to all Somali participants with known email addresses. The planning committee asked these Somali leaders to share the word and assist in finding transportation assistance for attendees from Hands Across the World. In this same the

committee advised that the Whitney Senior Center had no designated child care area and that any parents that brought small children would be responsible for their care.

There is a Minnesota tradition known as “the long goodbye” where people dressed for the outdoors stand in the entryway for an extended period in an on-going conversation. It certainly was not the warm and sunny weather that kept the Community Dialogue Session attendees inside. Members of both the Somali community and the judicial system were still talking with one another an hour after the event officially ended. The comment made most frequently by all attending the listening session was that it was a good (or even excellent) “first step.” Both groups readily acknowledged that it was only the beginning effort for the development of a better relationship.

Several appendages to this report have been included to give additional information about the planning and organization of this event:

pages 17-18	Organizations Which Assisted With Outreach to the Somali Community
pages 19-20	Judicial System Participants
page 21	event promotional flyer
pages 22-23	Guidelines and Information for Note Takers and Group Leaders

Major Themes of the Listening Session³

Cultural Differences

When immigrants arrive they are facing different religions, cultural values and legal rights.

There was applause among the members of the Somalis in the large group when it was noted that Somalis believe it is disrespectful and inappropriate to require Somali Muslim women to remove their head covering when their driver’s license photo is taken. Similarly, the requirement of removing a woman’s head cover when held in custody causes the loss of her dignity.

³ The summary and summation sections of this report contain the reported comments of the small group participants as recorded by the note takers. These comments have been transcribed here with minimal editing.

Handshakes between persons of the opposite gender are not appropriate within the Somali culture, unless between family members.

It was noted that incorrect assumptions are sometimes made about the length of time a Somali person has been living in Minnesota – some have been here for many years, although others for only a few months.

There are immigration concerns not shared by members of the general Minnesota population. Frequently immigrants are separated from important family members who remain in Africa. Immigrants have pressing concerns such as family reunions, needing special documentation, sending payments to Africa, language issues regarding documents. They may face deportation.

Another asked that members of the judicial system see people for who they are, treat people equally – noting that judges don't know the whole story.

Education is at the center of our culture noted a Somali woman in a small group – this is why so many of our young women have advanced degrees.

Differences in religion, skin color and language make circumstances difficult. . . communication is a big problem. As long as a law abiding citizen is comfortable, if there is no language barrier, it's better.

A Somali woman noted the members of the community will often hide problems to avoid problems they had experienced in their former country. Another woman stated that Somalis came to get peace of mind after the terrible war, so the trauma of fear of homelessness makes housing problems very hard for the Somali population.

People are defined as being Somali even after having been in the United States for many years.

Women cannot get employment because of the clothing they wear.

It was noted by non-Somali immigrants that there is similar lack of knowledge about Sudanese culture and language issues.

In the small group session she attended, one woman noted that she is here for "peace." Often a Somali person has never known peace before moving here – the problems here are of a lesser degree than the problems in the country they left.

Focus on the positive aspects of the Somali community as well.

Immigrants are unfamiliar with the system as a whole, but are just thrown into it.

Many times after being stopped by police on traffic matters, local Somalis just pay the ticket rather than asserting their rights as they believe they will not win, based on experiences in homeland where police may ask for a bribe or something bad might happen.

Somali people gather in a mosque; this is where they educate each other.

Language Barriers and Use of Interpreters

The ability to be understood through open communication is recognized by both sides as being of great importance. Problems are magnified by barriers of language. One Somali person noted that police responding to a call for assistance will frequently speak to the white person first even if a Somali or immigrant person had called them.

There was a discussion in of the women's small groups about ECHO⁴ videos. These are produced and distributed by a Minnesota non-profit organization to dedicated to "bridging the communications gap for immigrants and refugees in Minnesota."

Having a Somali person to meet and greet Somalis is helpful so there is a connection for them to the system. No one from the local Somali community is working with the court system; people from the cities are brought here. This is frustrating because there are people in the area who can help. Information should be shared about translating and training. There is a lack of trust with outside translators because they're not known to members of the local community; there is a concern that they may spread rumors.

Another person stated that it is hard to trust an interpreter you don't know or who doesn't know your family.

One person reported having worked three years ago with refugees trying to find a house. There was a language barrier – and because they didn't open a letter since they knew they wouldn't be able to read it, miscommunication occurred.

A participant indicated concerns about not being treated fairly because of the language barrier between herself and the general Minnesota population. Another woman stated that the interpreter worked for the other side, did not seem to be unbiased.

The high standards of the Courts for interpreters limits the number of interpreters to two or three people, too few, some not qualified. Folks in the community cannot get these jobs. Issues were discussed but a solution is needed. Now the testing process is changing; it's a half-year test rather than one year.

⁴ <http://www.echominnesota.org/>

It was noted that the St. Cloud Hospital provides follow-up contact afterwards – this could be beneficial following interactions between the judicial system and the Somali community. Another person noted that the hospitals and clinics have an “on demand” service of interpreters including telephonically. It was noted that some area law enforcement agencies are experimenting with “on demand” interpreter services.

Use ¹ of Somali Court-Certified Interpreters in the Seventh and Tenth Judicial Districts ² July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013				
	County	# of Events	# of Service Hours	Total Cost ³
Seventh Judicial District	Becker	1	2	\$ 180.00
	Benton	6	12	600.00
	Clay	3	4	426.00
	Douglas	0		
	Mille Lacs	1	2	300.00
	Morrison	0		
	Otter Tail	16	36	3,620.00
	Stearns	394	746	57,803.00
	Todd	1	2	400.00
	Wadena	0		
	totals	422	804	\$ 63,329.00
Tenth Judicial District	Anoka	115	186	\$ 10,623.00
	Chisago	1	2	250.00
	Isanti	0		
	Kanabec	0		
	Pine	1	2	240.00
	Sherburne	11	18	1,510.00
	Washington	38	78	3,456.00
	Wright	14	25	2,570.00
	totals	180	311	\$ 18,649.00
<p>¹ These interpreters are hired to provide services for the judge or magistrate presiding in the courtroom. They meet with the Somali person (and his or her attorney) needing language assistance briefly outside of the courtroom to establish a rapport, interpret during the proceeding, and provide a brief follow-up outside of the hearing to assist in understanding of the courtroom proceeding. The interpreter does not accompany the client to other judicial agencies or other attorney/client meetings.</p> <p>² Minnesota law requires courts to appoint - and pay for - a "qualified interpreter" to serve throughout judicial proceedings involving a non-English speaking defendant or litigant. The rules of practice mandate diligent efforts to appoint a certified interpreter from the statewide roster, but if one isn't available, the judge may turn to the noncertified interpreters on the list.[...] To become certified in Minnesota, individuals must master English and the target language, and have a thorough understanding of legal concepts and forensic terminology in both languages. They must also pass a legal interpreting competency exam and a written ethics examination (<i>Minnesota Lawyer</i>, March 1, 2010)</p> <p>³ Certified interpreters are paid different rates for travel time and interpreting time, the total of both fees is shown</p>				

A Sudanese person stated that the Sudanese-Minnesota community needs to be made aware of the interpreter program; how to become an interpreter.

There is a lack of understanding of the legal and court terms, the root issue of such matters as domestic violence and child protection.

The people in different regions of the original country speak with different dialects. Becoming a translator is very difficult, suggest changing the process of testing.

Translators are not available.

Insufficient knowledge about the legal system

There were many questions from small group Somali participants about aspects of immigration – a federal matter not directly addressed in Minnesota's district courts. However, the local legal services office and other agencies serving the Somali community offer legal assistance on immigration matters. This confusing situation of mixing state and federal legal services in an office but not in the courts is an example of how easily matters become more confusing for those not involved within the judicial system.

It was noted that most meetings with attorneys occur at the courthouse which is not always the best setting, and access to counsel at other times is limited. Somali people feel afraid when entering the court. They have no experience with Minnesota courts but feel fear of violence and jail.

One person reported that in a worker's compensation matter the case never went to the judge, everything was done just between the lawyers; it never went to a judge and then the claimant received nothing. The person indicated this also happens to other people where things go wrong at work, and people don't know who to tell or whether their rights have been violated. Persons involved don't understand what happened or why.

Members of the Somali community don't know their rights; don't know to speak with an attorney so they don't get the protections that they should. Don't know housing rights or employment rights. For example – if renting an apartment and missing an appointment, the renter can quickly lose their housing. Some people could become homeless because they don't know their rights.

A year ago Stearns County had a coffee meeting with the judges and law enforcement – this was really good.

Problems with the judicial system

Several Somali small group participants noted that the public defender system and legal services agencies were insufficiently funded to meet the needs of the eligible members of the community.

Another person stated they are unfamiliar with the public defenders assigned to cases, there is a lack of trust and understanding. Immigrants don't know basic rights of defendants.

A woman spoke of prejudicial policing, racial profiling – saying that it appears that police stop only black people. “White color all good, good thing,” and “want to be equal.” She feels that African immigrants are not getting opportunities because of skin color, more concerned with police. She reported that she'd never experienced racism in Africa. She feels the court relies on the police for the truth. In Africa – police care for you and drive you home – not here. Feels that judges here believe the police and not the person.

One person indicated that police and law enforcement do not recognize the Somali community's leaders: Somali Elder Council, mosque, and neighbors who may be alternatives to the court system for addressing problems.

There is no access to help for persons with mental illness. People are put away and there is no one left to care for the family remaining behind; children are displaced.

Children are taken by the police – family members don't understand the reason or the system. It feels like families are being pulled apart. Police seem unreasonable, don't communicate with the family, timelines aren't communicated. It was noted that the only way to find out about an arrest is when someone calls, there is no leadership structure.

It was noted that Judge Kundrat (Stearns County) is working with St. Cloud State University to establish an alternative resolution system. A Somali small group participant noted that mediation would be a helpful manner for conflict resolution, especially with a family issue or juvenile matter. Another person asked if an intern for the State University could be provided to aid immigrants who have contact with the courts.

One Somali person noted that the statistics he has seen indicate that the courts in Minnesota are not unfair to persons of color.

Another person noted that the system does not forgive – the record stays forever.

“Why can’t domestic violence (criminal matter) be withdrawn by a party?” It was stated that approach taken by prosecutors in these matters needs particular care – some cases should be dismissed.

Many participants indicated a belief in the existence of racial profiling, that they were stopped because of the color of their skin, or bias and prejudice. Another commended the Waite Park police who have a multi-cultural video to explain the law.

There’s not enough diversity in the court system noted one listening session participant.

Law enforcement terms confuse them – there is fear caused by uniforms. Speaking of perception, there is a sense that if you go to the police you are in trouble. When asked why they don’t just pay fines the participant responded that the interpreter asked why they hadn’t challenged the charge.

The Somali small group participants noted common themes of fear, not knowing the rules – it was noted that these can be overcome with training and teaching. Members of all cultures fear the courts if the person lacks experience with the courts. People are afraid of going to court since they don’t know what will happen, what the experience will be like. Somalis have been through a lot – and then there is stress with the legal system. As Somalis are already working so hard just to survive, interaction with the legal system adds much additional stress.

One man stated that being a Muslim and a black man poses difficulties. It is hard to find employment. He is a graduate of St. Cloud State University, but has been told that he’s unqualified. He said that he has been stopped by the police for no reason and was handcuffed. While he was released very soon thereafter, and told that he was not the right person (silver car), he found the incident very embarrassing because it happened in front of his friends. He has heard of others having the same experience.

A participant reported that he’d had an accident many years ago and was at fault. Years later, someone hit him, but again it was deemed to be his fault.

It is not uncommon for police to ask the vehicle driver who owns the car, and for proof of insurance... It seems that there are many stops occurring if a Somali is driving an expensive car... It is a universal complaint that the reason for the traffic stop is not

being communicated – police should say why they stopped the vehicle. Participants reported that police speak to the English person first, and listen to that person's story, placing the immigrant person at a disadvantage.

There is a belief that courts are associated with criminal activity – there is a need for education on other judicial activities: civil, conciliation, family, e.g. evictions.

The Court does not provide the services as stated "on paper".

When calling for assistance Somali persons are not treated by law enforcement with the same level of concern as given to others. Examples: questions asked or not asked. When calling dispatch Somalis are asked: "Who is fighting? What race are they?" This causes limited trust, not feeling safe.

It was reported that a Somali person who wanted to work in law enforcement was being treated differently by the community, they were trying to serve non-Somali people and not interacting with a Somali person. Two Somalis are employed in law enforcement in the Twin Cities metro area – this is a good thing.

A Somali person had a class with a police officer and found this to be a good way to learn about police work.

Problems with other services provided to the area's Somali community

It was noted by one small group attendee that resource agencies exist, but they are not connected to one another, and do not communicate with one another. Another noted that community members are not aware of what resources are available.

One woman noted that understanding social services and the processes necessary to secure assistance would help.

When some people come to Minnesota to settle they live in their cars. "You have to start from scratch."

Another woman indicated that employment issues include not getting called back, not understanding the language – wants to work, wants to be hired.

It was noted that employers should hire a translator to explain the job, the rules and expectations.

One woman noted that sometimes Somali people are accused of causing damage to rental housing when they did not cause the damage – some landlords take advantage of their lack of knowledge of their rights.

Persons with mental health issues are isolated, stigmatized.

There is a lack of jobs for Somali professionals. People graduate with degrees but often the only employment they can find is assisting other Somalis. Somali graduates leave the community to find employment in the field for which they are trained.

**ANONYMOUS WRITTEN SUBMISSION
RECEIVED FROM A MEMBER OF THE
SOMALI COMMUNITY: (copied verbatim)**

What brings a person into the court system? Deprivation – can't get a job.

One person noted that the Stearns County Human Services department provides great services to members of the central Minnesota Somali community.

Members of the immigrant community really need to have jobs. Many SCSU graduates move away from St. Cloud.

One small group participant noted that they'd experience "the run-around" from Human Services; the agency should accommodate the needs of those whom they serve.

as most immigrants, St. Cloud is really hard to adjust. to be a Muslim and Black is another scenario. little English or no English is a tragedy and going to an agency to an agency for employment is a disease, because local people are not friendly. religion, skin and cultural issues is something that exists everywhere, but lowering the number of cases is our goal today, I believe. the only way you can fully understand about this topic is to be one of them (Somali). and the only way can solve it is to go around to the Somali community and have the willingness to suffer the pain. when it comes to working in a meat factory, I think anyone can do it. speaking English is not a matter, but speaking it is a plus.

SUMMATION

Proposed Suggestions for Improving the Court System

Teaching and learning are very important. Providing education and awareness sessions about the Court system to immigrant would help. It would be helpful to have information sessions with explanations of how problems are resolved, how the system works, and taking note of cultural differences.

Reach out to the cultural leaders and conduct awareness sessions with community members who don't feel at home but are willing to organize with the judicial system.

Increase funding for the public defenders and legal services systems.

Have meetings with advocates for the Somali community several times a year to address language, employment and matters of abuse of rights.

Encourage meetings with law enforcement where the input is from members of central Minnesota's Somali community.

In one small group a woman asked if the system could look for ways for young people to do community service with agencies that work with the Somali population when juveniles are involved in the justice system.

Some young Somali people are considering becoming lawyers...but it was noted that it would be difficult to be a Somali lawyer because there are not a lot of job openings.

Review the processes of certifying and assigning interpreters to assure fairness and impartiality.

Continue meetings where the input is from persons in central Minnesota – change is coming, steps towards change began this summer.

Increase the diversity in staffing within the judicial system.

It's okay to come to court just to watch – this might be helpful for some persons.

Suggestions for Future Community Dialogue Sessions

All session participants agreed that it is important to continuing an on-going dialogue of Somali community members and representatives of the judicial system. The following suggestions for future community dialogue sessions were received. In providing this list no effort has been made to distinguish whether the suggestion is for the Equal Justice Committee of the Seventh or the Tenth Judicial District.

- I would suggest a follow-up session at a location with more ready access by the community members, such as a community meeting place closer to their residences. More sessions like this one with members of other minority communities would also be a good plan. (district court judge)
- Black church congregations could benefit from such a session.(assistant public defender)
- In the seventh District I think a session with the Native American population would be a strong possibility. Both Mille Lacs and Becker have significant Native American populations. (court administrator)
- Asian and Latino communities. (assistant county attorney)
- Look at a forum about unmet legal needs. Obviously there are a lot of groups looking at those issues but the aspect of local players in the system hearing the obstacles that people face might help remove some of those barriers. (court administrator)

- Other groups who may be focused upon include Hmong and Native American. (district court judge)
- It would be a big undertaking but you could have one for all LEP [Limited English proficiency] communities. (coordinator of Court Interpreter Program, Minnesota State Court Administrator's Office)
- Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. (assistant district court administrator)
- Native American. (assistant public defender)
- We may wish to look at whether outreach is need to the southeast Asian community i.e. Hmong, Loa, Cambodian, Vietnamese. I'm not aware of what our census figures show that population group in the Tenth, but it would be worth an assessment. I also think we may want to create subgroups whose responsibility is to keep in contact with the groups we have already reached out to i.e. Mille Lacs Band, Church of all Nations, Somali. We could also do an assessment of our courthouses accessibility for handicapped individuals. Most of our facilities now are fairly new so we shouldn't have issues. However, in Pine County a witness in a wheel chair probably can't fit in the space on the witness stand nor in the jury box. (district court judge)
- Latino. (district court judge)
- LEP, speakers of Spanish, Deaf/ASL community, LGBT community, people of limited economic means, general population. (district staff interpreter)
- I think we could work with the elderly and the financially challenged. We also need to revisit the Native American community. We also should consider what we can do with the subjects of disabilities (barriers to access) and continue to talk so we can be sensitive to issues we have not yet thought about. (district court judge)
- Mentally ill; veterans; homeless. (county GAL coordinator)
- Similar programs for the Native American and Hispanic communities would be something to consider. (district court judge)

Organizations Which Assisted With Outreach to the Somali Community

(in alphabetical order)

Anna Marie's Alliance, domestic violence advocacy and shelter, P.O. Box 367, St. Cloud, MN 56302 Telephone: (320) 253-6900

Catholic Charities, Immigrant and Refugee Services, 157 Roosevelt Road, Suite. 200, St. Cloud, MN 56301 Telephone: (320) 229-6021

Centra Care Health, Somali Community Health Outreach, Centra Care Clinic Women and Children, 1900 Centra Care Circle, Suite 2300, St. Cloud, MN 56303-5000 Telephone: (320) 654-3641

College of St. Benedict - St. John's University Intercultural Center, Director of Intercultural and International Student Services, College of St. Benedict, Murray Hall 152, St. Joseph, MN Telephone: (320) 363-5093

East African Community Outreach & Services (EACOS) [no additional information available although one person from this agency registered for the event telephonically]

Hands Across the World, 823 1st St. South, St. Cloud, MN 56301 Telephone: (320) 260-1072

Islamic Center of St. Cloud (local mosque) 375 5th Ave S, St Cloud, MN 56301 Telephone: (320) 654-1216

Lutheran Social Services, 22 Wilson Ave NE, St Cloud, MN 56304 Telephone: (320) 251-7700

Midwest Oromo Community , 22 Wilson Avenue NE Suite A, St. Cloud, MN 56302

Mogadishu Grocery, 1725 7th Street South, Washington Square, St. Cloud, MN Telephone: (320) 202-6529

Somali Café 119 E St Germain St , St. Cloud, MN 56304 Telephone (320) 259-0413

Somali Elders Council , 22 Wilson Ave NE St Cloud, MN 56304 Telephone: (320) 253-0010

St. Cloud Area Somali Salvation Organization (SASSO) 22 Wilson Ave NE, St Cloud, MN 56304 Telephone: (320) 224-9450

St. Cloud State University, Office of Multicultural Student Center, 154 Atwood, St. Cloud, Minnesota Telephone: (320) 308-3003

St. Cloud State University, Somali Student Organization, 154 Atwood, St. Cloud, Minnesota Telephone: (320) 308-3003

Saint Cloud University Somali Radio *an online radio station created by KVSC at St. Cloud State University*, 27 Stewart Hall, 720 4th Ave South, St. Cloud, MN 56301 Telephone: (320) 308-3066

St. Cloud Technical and Community College, MOSAIC & ESL programs 1540 Northway Drive, St. Cloud, MN 56303 Telephone: 320) 308-5998

St. Cloud Whitney Senior Center, 1527 Northway Drive, St. Cloud, MN 56303 Telephone: (320) 255-7245

Tri-Cap, *providing emergency services to residents of Benton, Sherburne and Wright Counties*, 1210 23rd Avenue South, PO Box 863, Waite Park, MN 56387 Telephone: (320) 251-1612

Judicial System Participants
(in alphabetical order)

- * **Abdikarim Ahmed**, Immigration Legal Assistant/Interpreter, Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid
- Debbie R. Anderson**, District Supervisor, St. Cloud, Minnesota Department of Corrections
- Brian Ansberry**, Guardian Ad Litem Coordinator, Benton County
- Martha Castañon**, Paralegal, Refugee, Immigrant and Migrant Services, Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services, member, Minnesota Committee for Equality and Justice
- Lo Chong**, Assistant Public Defender, Stearns County
- * **Ann Cofell**, Attorney, Deputy Director, Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid, member, 10th District Equal Justice Committee
- Nancy DeWan**, Legal Secretary, Jennings, DeWan & Anderson, North Branch, MN
- * **Bill Ekstrum**, District Court Judge, Washington County, chairperson, 10th District Equal Justice Committee, member, Minnesota Committee for Equality and Justice
- Peggy Gentles**, Court Administrator, Wright County, member, 10th District Equal Justice Committee
- Charles Glasrud**, District Court Judge, Stevens County (8th Judicial District)
- Fred Grunke**, District Court Judge, Stearns County
- Stephen Halsey**, District Court Judge, Wright County
- Wayne Hunt**, Sergeant, Anoka County Sheriff's Office
- Tim Huver**, Benton County Corrections, Lead Corrections Agent
- Dana Joseph**, Judicial Law Clerk, Stevens County (8th Judicial District)
- Tad Jude**, District Court Judge, Washington County, member, 10th District Equal Justice Committee
- Thomas Justin**, Lieutenant, St. Cloud Police Department
- Walter Kaminsky**, District Court Judge, Sherburne County
- Frank Kundrat**, District Court Judge, Stearns County, member, 8th District Equal Justice Committee
- * **George Lock**, Court Administrator, Mille Lacs and Todd Counties, staff to the 7th District Equal Justice Committee
- * **Mike Moriarity**, 10th District Court Administrator, staff to the 10th District Equal Justice Committee, non-voting member Minnesota Committee for Equality and Justice

Kathleen Mottl, District Court Judge, Wright County, member, 10th District Equal Justice Committee

Pat O'Donnell, Attorney, Smith, Paulson & O'Donnell & Associates, PA, Monticello, member, 10th District Equal Justice Committee

Rob O'Malley, Managing Attorney, Stearns County Public Defender's Office

* **Tim Ostby**, Court Administrator, 7th & 8th Districts, staff to the 7th District Equal Justice Committee

Enoch Owens, Senior Agent, Stearns County Human Services Community Corrections Division

Jim Reuter, District Court Judge, Pine County, member, 10th District Equal Justice Committee

Sally Robertson, District Court Judge, Wadena County, member, 7th District Equal Justice Committee

Polly Ryan, Coordinator of Court Interpreter Program, Minnesota State Court Administrator's Office

John Scherer, Chief District Court Judge, 7th Judicial District, member 7th District Equal Justice Committee, member, Minnesota Committee for Equality and Justice

Marcia Setrum, Assistant District Administrator, 7th Judicial District

Hal Sillers, Staff Interpreter, 8th Judicial District, member, 8th District Equal Justice Committee

Mark Sizer, Human Services Administrator, Stearns County

* **Rita Clare Steinhagen**, Judicial Law Clerk, Pine County, staff to the 10th District Equal Justice Committee

Kevin Tierney, Assistant Public Defender, Wright County, member 10th District Equal Justice Committee

Rex Tucker, Chief Public Defender, 7th Judicial District

Shan Wang, Assistant Chief, Criminal Division, Stearns County Attorney's Office

* **Leonard Weiler**, District Court Judge, Mille Lacs County, chairperson, 7th District Equal Justice Committee

Amaya Yurczyk, LSW, Child Protection Social Worker, Benton County Human Services

* **Laura Hood**, Aging Services Director, City of St. Cloud-Whitney Senior Center

* 10/26/13 Event Planning Committee Member

A Community Dialogue Session Hosted by The Equal Justice Committees
of the 7th and 10th Judicial Districts of Minnesota's Judicial Branch
and the City of St. Cloud – Whitney Senior Center



Saturday, October 26, 2013
at the Whitney Senior Center
1527 Northway Drive, Saint Cloud, MN
9 a.m. until noon

includes light luncheon catered by Somali Café
-- *pre-registration by Monday, October 21, 2013
is required for this event* --

**A LISTENING SESSION FOR THE
SOMALI COMMUNITY OF
CENTRAL MINNESOTA WITH
MEMBERS OF THE JUSTICE SYSTEM**

Please attend and share your experiences and thoughts with
Minnesota district court judges, lawyers, probation agents,
law enforcement officers, court administration staff, child
protection workers, guardians ad litem and others.
You will have an opportunity to speak but time may be limited.
Written comments will also be accepted.
Interpreters will be present to assist if needed.

*to register by email please contact: _____@courts.state.mn.us
to register by telephone, or if you have questions,
please call _____ at: (--) --- ---*

JUSTICE SYSTEM LISTENING SESSION WITH THE SOMALI COMMUNITY OF CENTRAL MINNESOTA
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2013, WHITNEY SENIOR CENTER, ST. CLOUD, MN 9 A.M. – NOON
GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION FOR NOTE TAKERS AND GROUP LEADERS

Event Schedule: *use of interpreters for those with limited English skills may require additional time*

- 8:30 – 9 a.m** registration of judicial system/Equal Justice Committee members – media coverage – photo taking – explanation of process to group leaders / note takers – Coffee will be available
- 9 – 9:15 a.m.** registration of other attendees
- 9:15 - 9:30 a.m.** welcome, brief introductions, event overview (Imam, Judges Ekstrum and Weiler)
LARGE GROUP
- - - Brief break for people to move to small group rooms
- 9:45 – 11 a.m.** breakout/listening sessions
SMALL GROUPS at least one volunteer equal justice committee person acting as designated note taker for each group
- 11 – 11:30** note takers report the major concerns of the group to the large group
LARGE GROUP Conclusion: thank you for all in attendance (Judges Ekstrum and Weiler)
- 11:30 – 12 noon** lunch catered by the Somali Café: salad with dressing, seasoned yellow rice, grilled meats with traditional spicy sauce (on the side), bananas, mango juice. Although it is customary for Somalis to eat without utensils, there will be plastic cutlery, paper plates, napkins and beverage glasses for all attendees.
- The Whitney Senior Center closes at 1 p.m. on Saturdays.
Muslim midday prayer for St. Cloud on this date is at 1:01 p.m. Additional time is needed for ablutions prior to prayer.

Small Groups The event attendees will be directed to three classrooms: one for men, one for women and one general group for those comfortable with and/or desiring a mixed group. It may be necessary to break into smaller groups within the classrooms in order to have a group size that allows people to have time to speak freely.

Suggestions for Dress While there is no mandated dress code we want to be respectful of cultural differences. It is suggested that males wear “office casual” and females dress somewhat modestly; no overly short skirts (slacks are fine) or low-cut or tight tops. Longer length sleeves are recommended.

Business Cards A similar event was held in 2010 by the 3rd Judicial District with the Somali Community of the Rochester area. That group noted that having professionals bring business cards would have been helpful as there is not enough time to respond to individual concerns, and perhaps not enough time for sharing contact information.

Communications Within Small Groups As this is a listening session our goal is to bring forth and record the concerns, problems or success stories that members of the Somali community have when interacting with members of the judicial system. L-E-A-P is a useful acronym that may be helpful here:

Listen, Empathize, Agree, Partner.

Regardless of the alleged behavior or belief, we are not seeking to argue or criticize. Some brief explanation may be needed, but the primary goal is to understand and record the concerns of the community members. Attendance at the event is not limited to Somali's, we will record the concerns expressed by any attendees.

Discussion Questions These questions are designed to initiate discussions within the small groups, there is no requirement that the questions actually be answered by the attendees – we hope to elicit the concerns of the community persons attending the event:

1. If there was one thing that you could change that would make the court system better for members of the Somali community, what would it be?
2. Based on a public opinion survey about 35% of the public believes the courts are unfair towards people of color. What is your perception? How or why did you gain this perception?
3. There are no Somali judges in Minnesota and few members of the state's court staff have connections to the Somali community. Do you feel confident that you will be treated fairly if you were to use the court? Do you have ideas for things the court system could do to help you feel more comfortable?
4. Do you have any other concerns about (or for) the courts or judicial system to share with us today?

Note-Takers/Final Report Each small group should have at least one note-taker to record the concerns expressed by group members. The highlights of these will be shared when the attendees re-gather as a large group. All notes will be collected at the end of the event, and the comments incorporated into a report which will be distributed to all persons attending the event registering with an email address, all members of the judicial branch and will be available to the public on the judicial branch website. All Equal Justice Committee members and members of the event's planning committee will also be asked to provide their feedback by email after the event for use in the drafting of the final report.

Emergency Contact for Date of Event Call or text ---- -----by cell phone: 651.----.----

History - In September 2008 the Minnesota Judicial Branch asked the members of the Equal Justice Committees of the ten judicial districts to host regular community dialogue sessions with members of ethnic, racial or other minority communities. The stated purpose of these dialogue sessions is to "create a public forum for community members to describe their experiences and discuss ideas for advancing racial equality and fairness in the courts."

**THE EQUAL JUSTICE COMMITTEES OF THE 7TH AND 10TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT THANK YOU FOR SHARING
YOUR TIME AND TALENTS WITH US TO MAKE THIS EVENT SUCCESSFUL**