

MINNESOTA JUDICIAL BRANCH DIVERSITY UPDATE

January - December 2013



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www.mncourts.gov

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COMMITTEE FOR EQUALITY AND JUSTICE

In June 2010, the Minnesota Judicial Council established the Committee for Equality and Justice (CEJ). The Committee was created to advance the Judicial Branch's efforts to eliminate from court operations bias that is based on race, gender, ethnicity, age, disability, socioeconomic status, religion, sexual orientation and any other status protected by law.



The 33-member committee is charged with:

1. Ensuring equal access to the courts and a fair and impartial courtroom;
2. Providing fair treatment of court users and employees;
3. Recommending education programs and course materials for judges and Judicial Branch employees;
4. Continuing to implement and monitor the recommendations of the Minnesota Task Force on Gender Fairness in the Courts;
5. Continuing to implement and monitor the recommendations of the Race Bias Task Force;
6. Promoting diversity in the appointments to Judicial Branch committees and boards to reflect the population served by the Judicial Branch;
7. Promoting diversity in selection and retention of court employees to reflect the population served by the Judicial Branch;
8. Promoting diversity in the selection of judges to reflect the population served by the Judicial Branch;
9. Promoting a high level of trust and public confidence in the judicial system.

The Committee for Equality and Justice (CEJ) and its subcommittees met throughout 2013 to fulfill its charge of advancing the Court's efforts to eliminate bias. Highlights of its achievements include:

CRIMINAL JUSTICE DATA

The Data Collection and Analysis subcommittee partnered with the State Court Administrator's Office (SCAO) Research and Evaluation staff and the Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Commission to make a data presentation to the CEJ on racial, ethnic and gender criminal data.

COURSE OFFERINGS FOR JUDGES AND EMPLOYEES

The Disability subcommittee and Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) subcommittee partnered with SCAO to develop and deliver two live, recorded WebEx courses:

- *Understanding Clients with Autism in the Minnesota Courts*
- *Understanding GLBT Clients in the Minnesota Courts*

The SOGI subcommittee also conducted an in-person CLE through the State Law Library on *Working with Transgender Individuals in the Court System*.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RISK ASSESSMENT BENCH GUIDE RE-ISSUE

The Gender Fairness subcommittee worked with SCAO staff to re-issue the [Domestic Violence Risk Assessment Bench Guide](#) for use at all stages of family, order for protection, civil and criminal cases involving allegations of domestic violence.

PRETRIAL RELEASE DECISIONS

The Racial Fairness subcommittee's recommendation that a branch-wide review of evidence-based practices used in making pretrial release decisions take place, was adopted and included in the Judicial Branch's FY14-15 Strategic Plan.

NATIONAL CONSORTIUM ON RACIAL AND ETHNIC FAIRNESS IN THE COURTS

This year, as in previous years, the CEJ sent a representative to the National Consortium's annual conference to learn about best practices from courts across the country and to exchange information related to identifying and eliminating racial and ethnic bias in the courts.

MULTILINGUAL VIDEO ON GOING TO COURT IN MINNESOTA

The Elimination of Barriers to Access subcommittee participated in an SCAO workgroup to help create

the 30-minute video Going to Court in Minnesota in English, Spanish, Hmong, and Somali. Nearly 1,250 captioned DVD videos were produced and distributed across the state in collaboration with ECHO Minnesota. The program aired on Twin Cities Public Television and YouTube. It is linked on the ECHO Minnesota and Judicial Branch websites. An English Language Learner (ELL) curriculum was also developed as a part of this project.



COMMITTEE FOR EQUALITY AND JUSTICE SUBCOMMITTEES

- Data Collection and Analysis
- Elimination of Barriers to Access
- Disability
- Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity
- Racial Fairness
- Gender Fairness

EQUAL JUSTICE COMMITTEES

EQUAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS

The Fourth Judicial District EJC held community forums to receive feedback and learn from local community groups. Presentations were made by the Little Earth of United Tribes, Minneapolis (March 2013), Lavender Bar Association (April 2013) and the Hispanic Bar Association (June 2013).

Equal Justice Committees

Each judicial district has established an Equal Justice Committee (EJC) to advance equality and promote multicultural understanding and competency among judges, court employees and justice system partners. The Equal Justice Committees may come to the Committee for Equality and Justice and/or its subcommittees for advice, counsel and exchange of ideas. The combined groups meet on an annual basis.

The Seventh and Tenth Judicial District EJCs partnered to conduct a Community Dialogue Session on October 26, 2013 with a focus on the local Somali community. Approximately 110 individuals attended at the Whitney Senior Center in St. Cloud, MN.

The Tenth Judicial District EJC also hosted an Ask-a-Lawyer-Day on March 30, 2013 at the Spirit River Community Center/Spectacular Events in Isanti, MN. Fifteen attorneys, child support workers and an IRS representative were available to respond to the concerns of the 90 community members in attendance.

The Tenth Judicial District EJC disseminated information about diversity training and related opportunities to judges, attorneys, administrative staff, law enforcement, human services and other professionals in the judicial system. EJC member Judge James Reuter is a participant of the State-Tribal Court Forum and EJC chair Judge William Ekstrum also is a member of the Committee for Equality and Justice.

The Tenth Judicial District EJC also held a presentation on “Muslims in Minnesota: Interactions with the Judicial System” with Imani Jaafar-Mohammad, Esq., a partner with Mohammad, Schiks & Jaafar, P.A.

JURY SELECTION

The Fourth Judicial District EJC monitored the jury pool selection process to ensure that it continues to reflect the diversity of the Hennepin County residents.

PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

The Sixth Judicial District EJC is continuing work funded by a three-year grant for a Racial Justice Improvement Project to address racial inequality and promote a Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI). Through this grant, the committee is also working on efforts to make pretrial release decisions in felony cases race-neutral by identifying and eliminating factors which create racial disparities in the pretrial release of offenders.

The Tenth Judicial District EJC worked on issues such as collateral consequences of criminal convictions, funding for public defenders and legal aid services and use of interpreters in the judicial system.

ADDRESSING COMMUNITY CONCERNS

In the Tenth Judicial District, the EJC chair receives any complaints alleging bias or discrimination within the district and then forwards the complaint to the appropriate supervising authority. The district’s website contains information about the EJC and instructions on how to submit complaints. Informational brochures are available at all Tenth Judicial District court administration offices. In other judicial districts, concerns and complaints are presented to the appropriate supervising authority. The EJCs also follow up with any concerns expressed in the Community Dialogues.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Members of the Judicial District Equal Justice Committees (EJCs), the Judicial Council's Committee for Equality and Justice (CEJ) and others have participated in various community involvement initiatives. Connecting with court users outside of the courthouse walls provides the means for interaction between judges, court employees and individuals from various backgrounds and experiences. Representatives from across the Judicial Branch participate in groups such as:

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

A workgroup of state agencies charged with creating and maintaining diversity and equal opportunity best practices to achieve the goal of recruiting, hiring, developing and retaining a diverse workforce.

MINNESOTA COMPASS ANNUAL MEETING

An annual event for government, private/public sector and non-profit organizations to review trends in topic areas such as education, economy and workforce, health, housing, public safety, and others.

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS SYMPOSIUM

An annual event for attorneys, employers, educators, and others concerned with human rights and social justice focused on the latest updates and trends on human rights issues.

THE FORUM ON WORKPLACE INCLUSION

(formerly named: *Multicultural Forum on Workplace Diversity*)

The largest diversity and inclusion conference in the country that exists to provide a compelling learning experience fostering business and thought leadership in workplace diversity and inclusion.

TWIN CITIES DIVERSITY ROUNDTABLE (TCDR)

Best-practice sharing through bi-monthly meetings with local public and private sector diversity and inclusion practitioners.

EQUAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE CONTACTS:

Jerry Winter, District Administrator
First Judicial District.....651-438-4330

Diane Carlson, Assistant District Administrator
Second Judicial District.....651-266-9223

Angie Armon, Assistant District Administrator
Third Judicial District.....507-206-2304

Shoree Pierce, EOD
Fourth Judicial District612-348-2863

Javier Callram, Staff Interpreter
Fifth Judicial District.....507-375-2557

Leanne Ventrella, Assistant District Administrator
Sixth Judicial District.....218-720-1542

George Lock, Court Administrator
Seventh Judicial District.....320-983-8313

Elisabeth Kirchner, Law Clerk
Mary Kay Palmer, Court Reporter
Eighth Judicial District320-231-6570

Travis Annette, Human Resources Manager
Ninth Judicial District218-759-4372(X113)

Mike Moriarity, District Administrator
Tenth Judicial District.....763-279-0150

EDUCATION

Providing diversity-related educational opportunities increases understanding, promotes inclusion and deepens cultural competence. Educational efforts support the goal of providing culturally sensitive service to the public and help promote positive interactions between the individuals served by the courts and those who work within the courts.

Judges participate in diversity and inclusion education activities through multiple avenues, including the Equal Justice Committees, New Judge Orientation Programs and the Annual Judges Conference.

Branch-wide education is available to both judges and employees on a quarterly basis through the Cultural Perspectives series. These 90-minute live WebEx sessions attract approximately 300 attendees each and focus on increasing our understanding of court users from various backgrounds. The sessions are recorded and made available to judges and employees via the Judicial Branch Intranet for future viewing.

2013 Cultural Perspectives topics included:

- Understanding GLBT Clients in the Minnesota Courts
- Understanding Clients with Autism in the Minnesota Courts
- Understanding the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)
- An Introduction to Understanding Implicit Bias

Employees also take part in training on Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Accommodations and on the use of a reporting tool to track the outcome of ADA accommodation requests. In addition to this training, employees in the Ninth Judicial District took part in an educational session on working with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Court Users in May 2013.

STATE LAW LIBRARY EVENTS

The State Law Library provided two Continuing Legal Education (CLE) events related to diversity and inclusion: *Working with Transgender Individuals in the Court System* and *A Minnesota Judge at Nuremberg*.

ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS

- “The Help” Movie and Group Discussion
- A Taste of Okinawa
- Generational Diversity in the Workplace
- Human Trafficking
- Little Things Mean a Lot
- Helping Customers with Limited English Proficiency
- Understanding White Privilege
- Why Diversity Matters
- 2013 Annual Judges Conference: Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in the Judiciary, by Dr. Vernā Myers

OTHER DIVERSITY-RELATED RESOURCES

JUDICIAL BRANCH COURTNET SITE

The Judicial Branch CourtNet Diversity intranet website contains a wealth of educational information including:

- Judicial Branch diversity statement
- Diversity efforts and resources
- [Calendar of events](#) of statewide events and holidays
- [Diversity links](#) on various groups and cultures

THE STATE LAW LIBRARY

The State Law Library keeps a listing of diversity and inclusion materials, which are available upon request in a Diversity Bibliography found at:

<http://mn.gov/lawlib/diversity.html>. Information on this site includes links to articles about diversity and inclusion topics concerning the workplace and the courts. In addition, 45 periodical articles were sent to employees on a listserv.



AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) RESOURCES

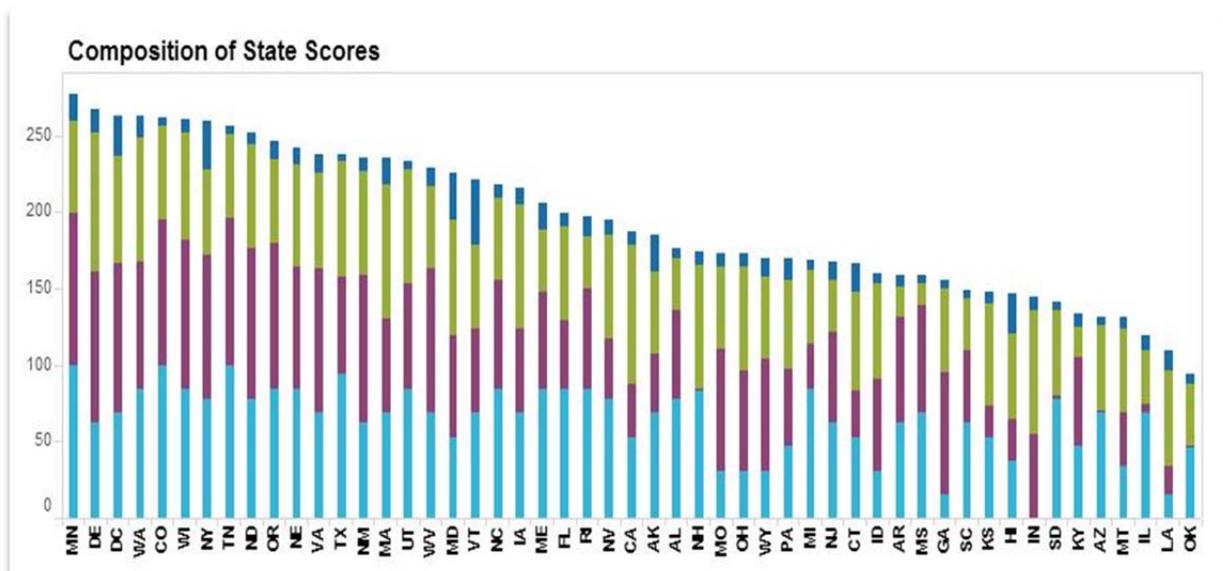
The Minnesota Judicial Branch includes the following resources on the public website at www.mncourts.gov to assist court users in making an ADA accommodation request: [ADA Request form \(electronic and paper\)](#) and [ADA contact listing](#). These resources are also available upon request in alternative formats.

LANGUAGE ACCESS PLANS

Language Access Plans ([LAPs](#)), formerly known as Limited English Proficiency Plans, are maintained by each court location to assess and plan for language access services outside of the courtroom. Training on LAP resources is recorded and available on demand.

JUSTICE INDEX

The Minnesota Judicial Branch has recently received the highest ranking related to language access and disability accommodations in the nationwide Justice Index.



JUDICIAL DISTRICT DIVERSITY CONTACTS

FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT CONTACT

Jeri Boetcher, Human Resources Manager..... 651-438-4344

SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT CONTACT

Sharon Harper, Human Resources Manager..... 651-266-8273

THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT CONTACT

Angie Armon, Assistant District Administrator..... 507-206-2304

FOURTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT CONTACT

Deb Morse, Human Resources Manager..... 612-348-5754

FIFTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT CONTACT

Judge Allison Krehbiel, Fifth Judicial District EJC Chair..... 507-931-6800

SIXTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT CONTACT

Leanne Ventrella, Assistant District Administrator..... 218-720-1542

SEVENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT CONTACT

Mary Stock, Human Resources Coordinator..... 320-656-6555

EIGHTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT CONTACT

Mary Stock, Human Resources Coordinator..... 320-656-6555

NINTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT CONTACT

Travis Annette, Human Resources Manager..... 218-759-4372(x113)

TENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT CONTACT

Kristine Lancaster, Human Resources Manager..... 763-279-0170

STATE COURT ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE CONTACTS

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and State Court ADA Contact
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Melanie Larsen Sinouhasy

Diversity Specialist and
Staff to the Committee for
Equality and Justice
651-284-4343

If you have any questions about this report or other diversity-related matters, please contact:

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