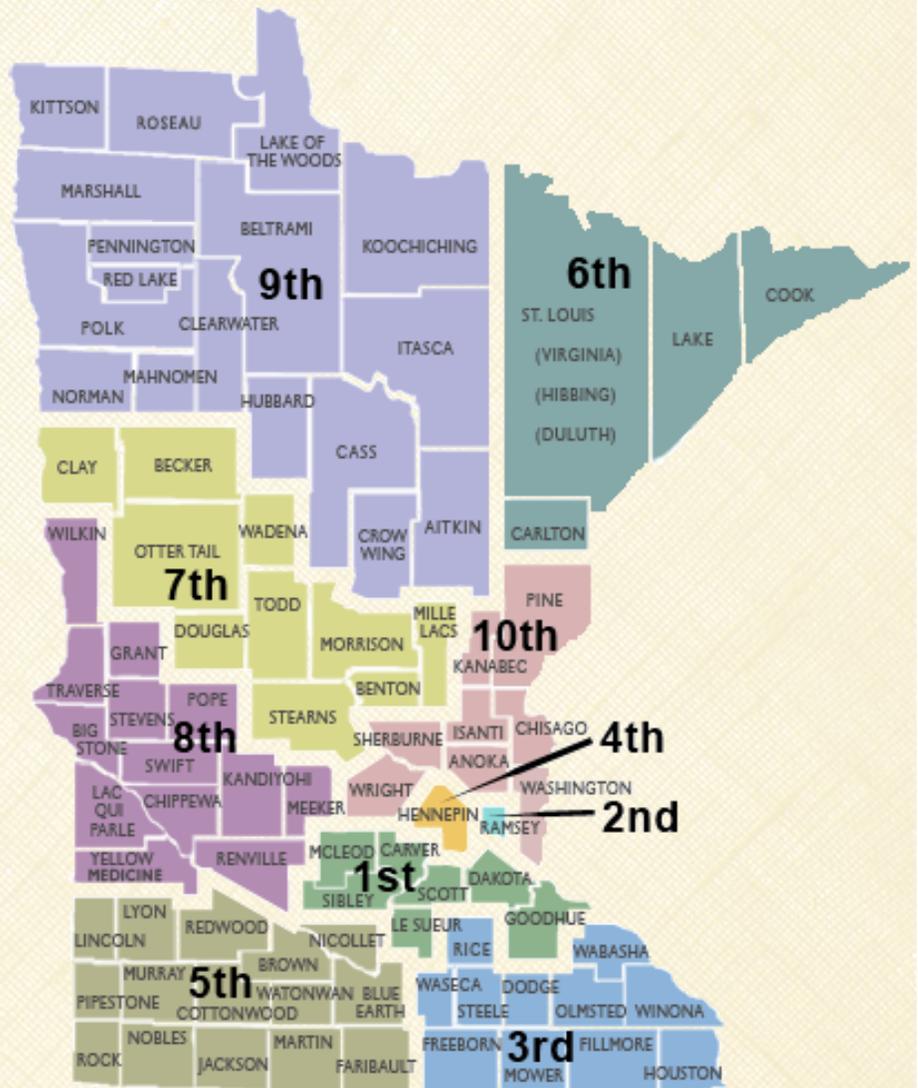




MINNESOTA JUDICIAL BRANCH

Diversity & Inclusion Annual Report

January - December 2014



State Court Administrator's Office

25 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Saint Paul, MN 55155

www.mncourts.gov

THE COMMITTEE FOR EQUALITY AND JUSTICE

The Minnesota Judicial Branch's Committee for Equality and Justice serves as an advisory committee to the Minnesota Judicial Council. The committee is comprised of representatives from each of Minnesota's ten Equal Justice Committees; a liaison from both the Minnesota Supreme Court and Minnesota Court of Appeals; the Minnesota State Bar Association's Diversity and Inclusion Director; and members of the community to broaden perspectives and capture opportunities for innovation.

The Committee for Equality and Justice meets on a quarterly basis to fulfill its charge of advancing the Minnesota Judicial Branch's efforts to eliminate bias. The 31-member committee is charged with:

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

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Committee for Equality and Justice Members

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.

COMMITTEE FOR EQUALITY AND JUSTICE HIGHLIGHTS

NATIONAL CONSORTIUM ON RACIAL AND ETHNIC FAIRNESS IN THE COURTS

The Committee for Equality and Justice Co-Chairs attend the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts annual conference to share and gain knowledge around equal justice issues facing state courts around the nation.

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 state courts.

The June 2014 conference was held in Powell, Wyoming at the Heart Mountain National Historic Landmark where 14,000 people of Japanese ancestry were incarcerated at the relocation center following the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

PRETRIAL RELEASE PROJECT

The Minnesota Judicial Council, through the FY14-15 Judicial Branch Strategic Plan, directed the Committee for Equality and Justice (CEJ) to study evidence-based tools for use in making pretrial release decisions statewide. The purpose of the study was to provide information which would lead to a greater understanding of:

- Statewide pretrial release practices;
- The use of risk assessment tools; and,
- Studying pretrial release outcomes impacted by race or gender.

The State Court Administrator's Research Division conducted the study with assistance from representatives from the Minnesota Department of Corrections, the Fourth Judicial District's Research Division, the Robina Institute at the University of Minnesota and the Arrowhead Regional Community Corrections. Members of the Committee for Equality and Justice served on the Pretrial Release Project Advisory Workgroup.

IMPLICIT BIAS BENCH CARD

The Committee for Equality and Justice also developed an [Implicit Bias Bench Card](#) for use by judicial officers. The purpose of the bench card is to build awareness of and address the potential for unconscious bias at various decision points in the court process. The bench card will be distributed statewide to judges in 2015.



EQUAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

EQUAL JUSTICE COMMITTEES

Each judicial district has established an Equal Justice Committee 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 for advice, counsel and exchange of ideas.

Minnesota Judicial Branch judges and employees, as well as members of the Committee for Equality and Justice and District Equal Justice Committees, have participated in various community involvement initiatives. Making these connections helps to build relationships with court users from diverse backgrounds and life experiences and provides an avenue for greater understanding between judges, court employees and court users.

FOURTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Hennepin County

The Fourth Judicial District Equal Justice Committee has been involved in various endeavors involving equal justice issues and makes a point to include the topic in bench committee meetings, bench retreats, email communications, online reading group discussions and other forums. Some highlights include:

- Law Day Listening Session
- Minority Law Student Reception
- Leadership Council on Diversity
- Hispanic Bar Association Recognition Event
- U of M Urban Outreach Center
- Haitian Leadership Conference
- Paladin Academy High School Graduation Speech
- Black Women Lawyers' Network Presentation
- Tribal Court Forum Dinner
- CLE Advising for the Disadvantaged



SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Ramsey County

The Second Judicial District Equal Justice Committee met with the community organization Ujamaa Place to explore possible ways in which to reduce conditional release and probation revocation violations particularly for African-American males.

EQUAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Equal Justice Committee member composition varies in each of the ten Judicial Districts across the State of Minnesota. The majority of Equal Justice Committees are comprised of individuals who are from the Bench, court employees, law enforcement, attorneys and variety of social service and community agencies and organizations.

EQUAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS

COMMUNITY DIALOGUE TOOLKIT

Community Dialogues are events sponsored by the Minnesota Judicial Branch's Equal Justice Committees to gather input from the public and justice partners on court concerns. Over the past year, the Committee for Equality and Justice worked to revamp the [Community Dialogue Toolkit](#) - a resource that provides tips and a framework for the district Equal Justice Committees to conduct Community Dialogue sessions. The updated toolkit will be distributed to the Equal Justice Committees in 2015.

FIFTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

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

Judges in the Fifth Judicial District met with the Directors of the Somali Community Barwaaqo Organization whose mission is to provide the Somali community with basic services for youth and adult members (i.e. life training, housing, job search and education). A panel comprised of members of law enforcement and probation joined Fifth Judicial District Equal Justice Committee Chair Judge Krehbiel to speak at a gathering of Somali individuals regarding juvenile justice.

Members of the Fifth Judicial District and Southern Minnesota Legal Aide met with representatives of the Nobles County Integration Collaborative to discuss how the court system can reach out to members of various diverse communities (e.g. Lao, Burmese, Karen, Sudanese, Ethiopian, Guatemalan and Mexican). Judges in the district also spoke to students of South Central College as part of its International Festival on the topic of immigration.



EQUAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS

SIXTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Carlton, Cook, Lake and St. Louis Counties

The Sixth Judicial District Equal Justice Committee has participated in St. Louis County's Racial Justice Improvement Project (RJIP) as a part of an American Bar Association grant awarded in 2012. The RJIP team has broad representation with members from the judiciary, law enforcement, public defenders, county attorneys and the Native American community. The group has been active in addressing the disproportionate number of people of color charged with felony offenses that are in pre-trial detention facilities.

NINTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Aitkin, Beltrami, Cass, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Itasca, Kittson, Koochiching, Lake of the Woods, Mahnommen, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake and Roseau Counties

Ninth District Equal Justice Committee Chair Judge Wahwassuck participated in a panel discussion at the Criminal Justice Institute to address whether or not Minnesota Justice is "post racial." She also provided the keynote address at a meeting between Tribal Court and State Court Judges hosted by Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Gildea. Judge Wahwassuck discussed her experiences working in both the tribal and state court systems and made suggestions for facilitating communication and collaboration between the systems. Judge Wahwassuck meets regularly with the judges of the Leech Lake Tribal Court regarding cross-jurisdictional strategies to improve outcomes and access to justice.

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EIGHTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

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

The Eighth Judicial District Equal Justice Committee met with the North American Somali Bar Association in hopes of conducting a future Community Dialogue.



EQUAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS

NINTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

(Continued)

Beltrami County in the Ninth Judicial District also has Tribal Representatives as a part of the Children’s Justice Initiative. Tribal members also participate in the Child Protection Teams for Beltrami and Cass Counties. The Ninth Judicial District Court Bench regularly reviews the number of American Indian youth at the Northwestern Minnesota Juvenile Center. Judges continue to participate in the Tribal Court-State Court Forum and the Joint Tribal-State Jurisdiction Wellness Courts in the Ninth Judicial District (Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe-Cass-Itasca Counties). The Wellness Courts continue to be successful after nearly ten years in existence.

TENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Anoka, Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Pine, Sherburne, Washington, Wright Counties

The Tenth Judicial District EJC hosted an “Ask a Lawyer” event in Isanti County with approximately 70 people in attendance. A total of 14 attorneys volunteered at the event regarding a number of areas of law, particularly related to probate, real estate, social security issues, and landlord/tenant issues. This EJC also works to maintain an ongoing relationship with the Native American community in Pine County.



"We are, at almost every point of our day, immersed in cultural diversity: faces, clothes, smells, attitudes, values, traditions, behaviours, beliefs, rituals"

- Randa Abdel-Fattah

GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

STATE GOVERNMENT GROUPS

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

[ACCESS](#) is a workgroup of statewide agencies led by Minnesota Management and Budget. The group 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.

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS SYMPOSIUM

The Minnesota Department of Human Rights hosts 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.

In addition to the activities involving the Minnesota Judicial Branch's Committee for Equality and Justice and District Courts' Equal Justice Committees shared in this report, representatives from across the Minnesota Judicial Branch participate in groups such as:

MINNESOTA COMPASS ANNUAL MEETING

[Minnesota Compass](#) provides demographic statistics online and hosts an annual event for government, private/public sector and non-profit organizations to learn about the latest data trends in topic areas such as education, economy and workforce, health, housing, public safety, and others.

THE FORUM ON WORKPLACE INCLUSION

Produced by the University of St. Thomas Opus College of Business, the [Forum on Workplace Inclusion](#) is a conference where cross-sector leaders gather to learn and grow through facilitated dialogue, structured networking and experiential learning. This is the largest conference in the country on workplace diversity and inclusion.

TWIN CITIES DIVERSITY ROUNDTABLE

The Twin Cities Diversity Roundtable is a collective of diversity and inclusion practitioners that meet bi-monthly to share best practices with representatives from local public and private sectors.



DIVERSITY & INCLUSION EDUCATION

Providing diversity and inclusion-related learning opportunities in the Minnesota Judicial Branch fosters understanding while also helping to promote the cultural competence and agility of court employees and judicial officers. Educational efforts support the goal of providing culturally sensitive service to the public and encourages positive interactions between the individuals served by the courts and those who work within the courts.

CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

Judges and employees received branch-wide cultural learning opportunities statewide throughout the year through the Cultural Perspectives webinar series. These 90-minute live sessions are recorded for future viewing and attract approximately 300 attendees per session. Some court managers and supervisors have incorporated these learning opportunities into annual employee performance and education goals.

2014 Cultural Perspectives topics included:

- Culture of Poverty
- Domestic Violence Risk Assessment Bench Guide Training
- Understanding Court Users Experiencing Homelessness

STATE LAW LIBRARY CLE EVENTS

The State Law Library provided five [Continuing Legal Education \(CLE\) events](#) related to diversity and inclusion over the course of 2014:

- Echoes of War: The Combat Veteran in Criminal Court
- Stress, Addiction, Mental Illness and the Rules of Professional Responsibility
- History of the Suffrage Movement in Minnesota
- Sexual Violence
- Kippahs, Crosses and Hijabs: Religious Apparel, the Workplace and the Law

MINNESOTA JUDICIAL BRANCH EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS

- ICWA training
- Generational Diversity
- The Soloist - Film and Discussion
- Language Access Plan
- Liberty - Film and Discussion
- Trans 101 in the Courts
- LGBT in the Workplace
- Bridges Over Poverty
- Serving Customers with Mental Illnesses
- 42 – The Jackie Robinson Story - Film and Discussion
- The Americans with Disabilities Act, Including Amendments
- Understanding White Privilege
- Bridges Over Poverty
- The Somali Community
- Transgender 101
- It's Not Just Marriage
- Diversity on the Bench with the Ramsey Bar
- National Alliance on Mental Illness: "People with Mental Illnesses and the Courts"



DIVERSITY & INCLUSION RESOURCES

JUDICIAL BRANCH COURTNET SITE

The Judicial Branch CourtNet Diversity intranet website serves as a repository for information on events and education sources including:

- Judicial Branch diversity statement
 - Diversity efforts and resources
 - Calendar of events of ongoing statewide events and holidays
 - Diversity links on various groups and cultures
-

STATE LAW LIBRARY MATERIALS

The State Law Library maintains a growing source of diversity and inclusion materials listed in the [Diversity Bibliography](#) found at: <http://mn.gov/lawlib/diversity.html>. These materials are available upon request. In addition to the numerous scholarly articles sent to a listserv for Judicial Branch employees, information on this site includes links to sources concerning diversity and inclusion in both the workplace and the courts.



RECRUITMENT

The Minnesota Judicial Branch is committed to hiring and retaining the best and brightest talent while also seeking a workforce that is reflective of the communities we serve. We value diversity in our recruitment and applicant screening processes and encourage individuals with multiple language skills and diverse background to apply. To that end, Human Resources employees have participated in the Hmong Resource Fair and University of Minnesota Government Job Fair among other events.



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION RESOURCES

LANGUAGE ACCESS PLANS

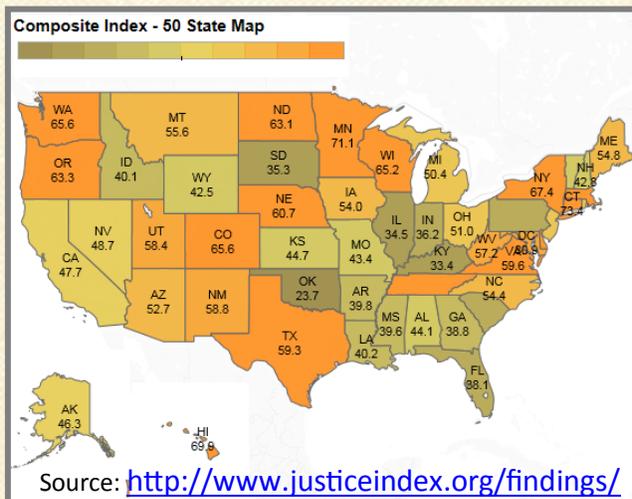
Language Access Plans ([LAPs](#)) are maintained to assess and plan for language access services outside of the courtroom. Training on LAP resources is recorded and is also available on demand.

GOING TO COURT IN MINNESOTA CURRICULUM

The “Going to Court in Minnesota” video project created in 2013 was expanded to include an [ELL Adult Basic Education curriculum](#) developed by English Language Learner (ELL) teachers. Not only does the course provide the opportunity for students to improve upon their English skills, but it offers the opportunity for learners to gain an understanding of the court system. Since its inception, the video has reached thousands of individuals in English, Hmong, Somali and Spanish through ECHO Minnesota, YouTube, Twin Cities Public Television and the [Minnesota Judicial Branch Public Website](#).

JUSTICE INDEX

The Minnesota Judicial Branch has again received high rankings, earning the third place composite score (71.1), in the National [Justice Index](#). The Minnesota Judicial Branch gained the highest scores in language access (98.19) and disability accommodations (100).



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. Training on ADA resources is recorded and available to employees on demand.

If you have any 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