



**MINNESOTA
JUDICIAL BRANCH**

Diversity & Inclusion Annual Report

January - December 2015



State Court Administrator's Office

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

2015 MINNESOTA JUDICIAL BRANCH DIVERSITY & INCLUSION ANNUAL REPORT

THE COMMITTEE FOR EQUALITY AND JUSTICE

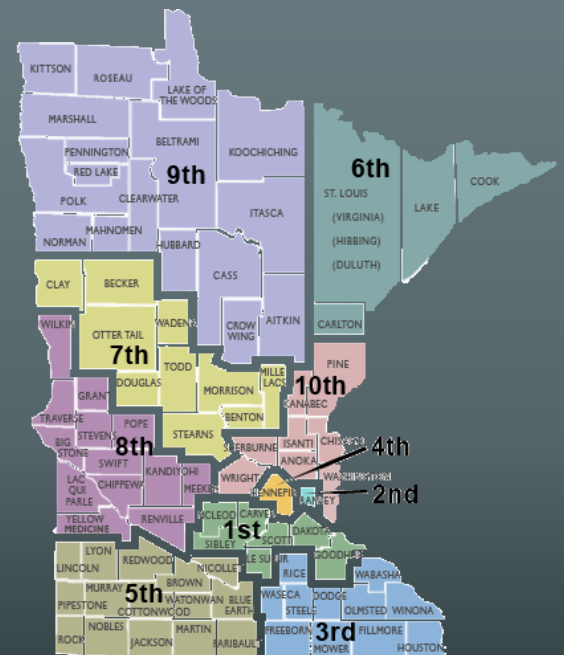
The Committee for Equality and Justice (CEJ) works to promote equal access to justice for all court users. An advisory committee to Judicial Council, the 27 member CEJ is comprised of judges, attorneys, court employees, members of the public and representatives of each of the ten Judicial District Equal Justice Committees.

The Committee for Equality and Justice meets four times a year to fulfill its charge of:

- 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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Committee for Equality and Justice . . .	Page 2
Judicial Districts and Equal Justice Committees.	Page 4
Diversity and Inclusion Education	Page 9
Groups and Committees	Page 11
Diversity and Inclusion Resources	Page 12



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

A Committee for Equality and Justice Co-representative attends the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts annual conference to share best practices from other state courts. Participants have the opportunity to build connections and increase knowledge of equal justice issues from across the nation.

Members of the CEJ and EJC attended the [2015 NCREFC Annual Conference](#) which took place June 10-13, 2015 in Buffalo, New York. The conference focus for the year was Implicit Bias and how courts can address it.



STRATEGIC GOALS AND SUBCOMMITTEES

In 2015, the CEJ was restructured to conduct its work through subcommittees formed around strategic goals. The CEJ Strategic Goals are mirrored in the [FY16-17 Minnesota Judicial Branch Strategic Plan](#). This approach allows for greater collaboration between committee members with expertise on race, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity and disability issues among other areas. The three subcommittees are as follows:

- Immigrant/Race Bias Data Subcommittee
- Education Subcommittee
- Community Dialogue Subcommittee

CRIMINAL RACE DATA

CEJ staff provided a statewide overview of race data collection rates for the Judicial Administrators and Directors (JAD) in March 2015 to help encourage courts to obtain race data collection rates of at least 90%. The Minnesota Judicial Branch has required self-reported race data collection in all criminal, delinquency, CHIPS and traffic cases with a court appearance since 2001.

CEJ staff is in the process of sharing information with each judicial district on available race data, collection rates, adult criminal filings and dispositions and defendants in pretrial custody throughout FY16-17 at Equal Justice Committee (EJC) meetings, Court Administrators' meetings and/or Bench meetings. Tracking reliable race data is crucial for efforts such as the Pretrial Release Initiative and to help monitor equal treatment of court users.

IMPLICIT BIAS BENCH CARDS

In April of 2015, the Committee for Equality and Justice distributed over 300 Implicit Bias Bench Cards to judicial officers statewide. This bench card serves to address the potential for unconscious bias at various decision points in the court process and was the first of its kind in the nation.



COMMITTEE FOR EQUALITY AND JUSTICE HIGHLIGHTS AND EQUAL JUSTICE COMMITTEES

INTERPRETER PUBLIC WEBSITE

CEJ and Court Interpreter Program staff worked to change the language on the interpreter complaint form to share that complaints can be initiated by phone call. This update will help to address access concerns for individuals with low-literacy or others who prefer to use the phone rather than electronic or paper means of communication. CEJ staff reviewed the current court interpreter complaint process and shared information on the process and feedback forms from the Judicial Branch website: <http://www.mncourts.gov/Help-Topics/Court-Interpreter-Program.aspx>.

PRETRIAL RELEASE INITIATIVE

The Judicial Branch continued to study evidence-based tools for use in making pretrial release decisions statewide as a part of the FY16-17 Minnesota Judicial Branch Strategic Plan. The Pretrial Release Initiative workgroup, with participation from public safety partners, is working to develop recommendations for Judicial Council in 2016.

EQUAL JUSTICE COMMITTEES

Equal Justice Committees exist to advance equality and promote multicultural understanding and competency among judges, court employees and justice system partners. Each EJC is varied in their membership and are primarily comprised of judicial officers, court employees, law enforcement, attorneys, community members and/or community organizations.

Equal Justice Committees meet regularly to discuss and act on local access to justice issues. They have been established in each of the ten Judicial Districts to not only increase access to justice at the local level, but also to help implement statewide efforts and bring attention to input and ideas from the local courts.

COMMUNITY DIALOGUES

Over the past year, CEJ staff have worked to help support Equal Justice Committees as well as to assist with planning Community Dialogues. Per the FY16-17 Minnesota Judicial Branch Strategic Plan, a Community Dialogue is to take place in each of the Judicial Districts over the course of two years. CEJ staff provide information on how to conduct a Community Dialogue and help with recruitment, logistics, and as needed, to identify local issues/topics to focus Community Dialogue audiences and session discussion topics.

The Fourth Judicial District most recently conducted Community Dialogue/Listening Sessions “Tell It to the Judge: A Community Listening Session with Hennepin County Judges “ on April 30 and November 16th, 2015.

Information on Community Dialogues can be found on the [CEJ Public Website](#).



JUDICIAL DISTRICT AND EQUAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS



FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Carver, Dakota, Goodhue, Le Sueur, McLeod, Scott and Sibley Counties

In September 2015, the First Judicial District held two Employee Education Days in which approximately 100 court employees were trained on a variety of topics relevant to their work. This year's agenda included an opportunity for staff to learn more about diversity and inclusion efforts of the Judicial Branch. The State Court Administration Office's Human Resources Diversity Specialist presented on the topic of Why Diversity Matters. The training was developed collaboratively by local management and human resources and focused on the changing demographics of the state and region, gave an overview of resources available in the courts and explored differences and similarities of colleagues and court users from various backgrounds and experiences.

SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Ramsey County

Members of the Second Judicial District have been actively involved in events and programs to advance equality and build connections between the Bench, court employees, justice partners and court customers. The Second Judicial District Equal Justice Committee has also worked with Project Remand to review bail assessment tools and consider a pretrial validation study. In 2015, the Second Judicial District implemented several improvements to the management and provision of interpreters for court customers.

The Equal Justice Committee and members of the Bench undertook several additional initiatives this year, some of which included:

- Sponsoring Continuing Legal Education program entitled "The Civil Rights Act at 50 Years"
- Delivering keynote address at Mitchell Hamline School of Law Cesar Chavez Dinner
- Presenting for statewide Court Interpreter e-Learning Program
- Moderating for Minnesota Defense Lawyer's Association program on "Diversity in the Courtroom"
- Serving as a panelist for Robina Institute Annual Conference program on "Proposal for Change, Divergent Worlds, Converging Worlds: The Realities of Life on Probation and Parole"
- Participating in the KPNP Family Partnership Hmong Show
- Presenting at Fourth Annual Hmong American Mediation Event
- Being a membership of Ramsey County Bar Association Diversity Committee
- Providing an open forum on probation revocations with Ujaama Place
- Participating in Marnita's Table community events
- Speaking engagements at local high schools
- Judging for various mock trial and moot court programs



JUDICIAL DISTRICT AND EQUAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS

FOURTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Hennepin County

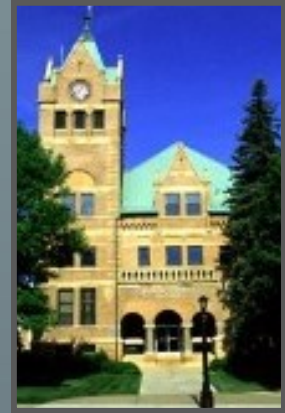
The Fourth Judicial District Equal Justice Committee focused on education and community outreach efforts in 2015. Education and training prepares employees to work with an increasingly diverse workforce and to be culturally sensitive to court users from varying backgrounds and experiences.

Community outreach serves to create a public forum for community members to share their experiences with the courts and discuss ideas for advancing equality and fairness regarding race, gender, ethnicity, age, disability, socioeconomic status, religion, sexual orientation, and any other status protected by law.

Presentations have been made to judicial officers at the Fourth Judicial District's 2015 Spring Bench Retreat on Court Interpreters: Access to Justice for Limited English Proficient Court Users. Implicit Bias training from Professor Rachel Godsil was a topic at the Fourth Judicial District 2015 Fall Bench Retreat.

Other courses provided to judges and employees included:

- African Immigrant Communities
- The Americans with Disabilities Act
- Bafa Bafa (cross-cultural diversity training program)
- Fruitvale Station (movie)
- Generational Diversity
- Gray Area Thinking (workplace training)
- Language Access Plan
- LGBT in the Workplace
- Serving Customers with Mental Illnesses
- Trans 101 in the Courts
- Unaccompanied Minors in State Court
- Understanding Classism
- The Use of Discretion to Deport Non-Citizens



THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT

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

The Third Judicial District Equal Justice Committee worked to recruit new members. The EJC is planning to hold a Community Dialogue session in 2016 and has enlisted the assistance of the Diversity Council of Rochester.

JUDICIAL DISTRICT AND EQUAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS



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 worked on planning an upcoming Community Dialogue with members of the Somali American community in Willmar, Minnesota. EJC representatives met with members of the North American Somali Bar Association in Minneapolis to discuss these plans. The organization has offered suggestions and assistance as they have held similar events in the Twin Cities area.

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 focused on the immigrant community for 2015. The EJC has met with members of the Somali community, city officials and local schools to create a dialogue between the various entities. In addition, the EJC is working to address assisting undocumented individuals who feel afraid to seek help.

SIXTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Carlton, Cook, Lake and St. Louis Counties

The Sixth Judicial District partnered with State Court Administration Court Information Office and the Minnesota State Bar Association to conduct an Open Courthouse event at the Duluth Courthouse in May 2015. The event drew over 200 people from the community who learned more about how the courts work, the role of the courts and other justice partners and included a tour of the courthouse.

SEVENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

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

Mille Lacs County worked on establishing a Domestic Violence Court to serve both tribal and non-tribal members. In addition, Becker County collaborated with the White Earth Band of Ojibwe on a creating a DWI Court.



JUDICIAL DISTRICT AND EQUAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS

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

The Ninth Judicial District EJC worked on ways to increase race data collection rates and make improvements for court users who are deaf or hard of hearing. Both the EJC and Court Administrator's meetings received a race data presentation from CEJ staff in the summer of 2015

Beltrami County District Court held a flag installation ceremony in December 2015 with the Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians and the Leech Band of Ojibwe. The Red Lake and Leech Lake Tribal Flags were installed in the Beltrami County courtrooms in a ceremony attended by numerous community members. Chief Judge Benshoof also met with the Red Lake Tribal Council to follow up and discuss ways in which the systems can work together.

EJC Chair Judge Korey Wahwassuck attended meetings with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe to address disparity issues and plan community cultural activities.

The Joint Tribal-State Jurisdiction Wellness Courts in the Ninth (Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe-Cass-Itasca Counties) continue to be successful after nearly ten years in existence. The collaborative Wellness Courts reduce recidivism and improve public safety in the community and continue to facilitate improved relations between the Tribe and local communities. They have inspired additional joint-jurisdiction collaborations both locally and nationally. In 2015, a joint jurisdiction court modeled after Minnesota's groundbreaking work went operational in California and another is in the planning stages in Alaska.



TENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

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

The Tenth Judicial District held Education Days for court employees in September 2015 which included a session on Disability Accommodations in the Minnesota State Court System.

The Tenth Judicial District EJC also hosted an "Ask a Lawyer" event with approximately 40 people in attendance. Ten attorneys volunteered at the event regarding a number of areas of law including Family, Real Estate and Probate. The public came to this event from Anoka, Isanti, Chisago, Pine and Washington counties.



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION EDUCATION

CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

Cultural Perspectives are live, 90-minute webinars held every quarter to highlight historical, cultural and family issues from various communities. Sessions generally attract 200-300 attendees.

Topics in 2015 included:

- Understanding Safe Harbor: Minnesota's Response to Juvenile Exploitation and Trafficking
- Understanding Immigrant Youth in Minnesota Courts
- Understanding Court Users Experiencing Mental Health Concerns
- Understanding the ADA in Minnesota Courts

STATE LAW LIBRARY CLE EVENTS

The State Law Library provided five Continuing Legal Education (CLE) events related to diversity and inclusion in 2015:

- Consequences of Criminal Records
- Sokolow v. PLO: The U.S. Courts and the War on Terror
- Hijabs and the High Court: Religious Apparel, the Workplace & the Law
- Uncovering the Sentencing Guidelines
- Stress, Addiction, Mental Illness and the Rules of Professional Responsibility

Ensuring that engaging diversity and inclusion courses are offered helps to create an inclusive workplace as well as to provide the best customer service to court users. Minnesota Judicial Branch employees and judges receive education via Cultural Perspectives, court education days, judicial education events and through CLEs.

JUDICIAL EDUCATION

Judicial officers received various diversity and inclusion-related educational opportunities in 2015 through programs such as the Annual Conference of Judges, Bench Retreats and the Minnesota District Judges Association (MDJA) and Minnesota District Judges Foundation (MDJF).

Topics in 2015 included:

- National Sexual Violence Training
- Working with African Immigrants
- Effects of Collateral Consequences
- Lessons Learned From Ferguson
- Justice in Cases Involving Immigrant Families and Immigrant Crime Victims
- Engaging At-Risk Communities to Combat Terror Organization Recruitment
- The Dark Side of Innocence [discussing individuals with bipolar disorder]
- Language and Cultural Barriers Impacting Interpreters in the Courtroom
- After Equality, No Opportunity
- Rez Life: An Indian's Journey Through Reservation Life
- The Americans With Disabilities Act – Equal Access to the Courthouse and the Courts
- A Primer for District Court Judges on Determining the Applicability of the Indian Child Welfare Act
- Working With Interpreters in Your Courtroom
- A Lesson Before Dying: a reading from the 2015 Judicial Decision Making program



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION EDUCATION

EMPLOYEE EDUCATION

In addition to diversity and inclusion education offered through Cultural Perspectives, State Law Library CLEs and district-based opportunities, employees also receive training on how to best assist limited English speaking court users; those with limited incomes; and individuals with a disability.

LANGUAGE ACCESS BASIC TRAINING AND RESOURCES

In 2016, the Minnesota Judicial Branch will offer employees on-demand Language Access Basic Training (LABT) which was produced by the New Mexico State Courts in partnership with the State Justice Institute. Language Access Plans ([LAPs](#)) continue to be used to plan for language access services outside of the courtroom.

BREAKING POVERTY BARRIERS TO EQUAL JUSTICE TRAININGS

The Breaking Poverty Barriers to Equal Justice training was a cornerstone of pro bono attorney training efforts statewide in 2015. Minnesota judges played a leadership role in consulting on the curriculum and helping to facilitate the training for pro bono attorneys at events in Minneapolis, St. Paul and Duluth.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) RESOURCES

The Minnesota Judicial Branch includes resources on the public website at www.mncourts.gov to assist court users in making an ADA accommodation request including an ADA Accommodation Request form (electronic and paper) and a list of ADA contacts at each county. These resources are also available upon request in alternative formats. Education on ADA resources is available on-demand for judicial officers and employees.

2015 ADA TRAININGS

The November 2015 Cultural Perspectives session on Understanding the ADA in Minnesota Courts provided information on procedures and policies, as well as information for judges and employees to clarify when ADA accommodation requests should go to a judge versus to the ADA contact.

Several other disability-related trainings took place in the past year:

- Disability Accommodations in the Minnesota State Court System, Tenth Judicial District Education Days: September 9-11, 2015
- Minnesota District Judge's Association/Minnesota District Judge's Foundation Annual Conference: The Americans with Disabilities Act: September 10, 2015
- Minnesota Court Administrators and Managers (MACM): September 30 – October 2, 2015

*"We don't see things as they are,
we see things as we are." - Anais Nin*

GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION GROUPS

Representatives from across the Minnesota Judicial Branch participated in the groups and events listed below to help foster cultural sensitivity, build relationships and gain a better understanding of those who work in and those who use the courts.

THE FORUM ON WORKPLACE INCLUSION

[The Forum on Workplace Inclusion](#) is a three-day conference designed to focus on cutting edge learning, interactive discussions and lasting connections between and amongst leaders from across the country.

TWIN CITIES DIVERSITY ROUNDTABLE (TCDR)

The Twin Cities Diversity Roundtable meets bi-monthly share best practices with representatives from local public, private and non-profit sectors. Diversity and inclusion practitioners from various industries take turns hosting which provides members a glimpse into to the various ways in which organizations and employers respond to workforce diversity-related issues.

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. Tracks include breakout sessions on employment, public policy, police and community, trending topics, business and economic development.

MINNESOTA COMMUNITY ADVISORS ON RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION SOLUTIONS (MnCARRS)

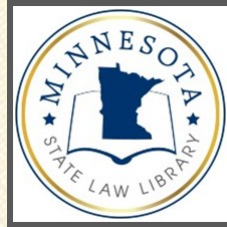
[MnCARRS](#) is a partnership between agencies within the State of Minnesota and leaders of organizations representing minority communities, women, veterans, and people with disabilities. MnCARRS partners serve as the bridge between diverse communities and the State of Minnesota. MnCARRS partners meet on a quarterly basis to advise the state and share best practices on recruitment, hiring and retention. Additionally, state agencies and MnCARRS partners participate in partner-sponsored career fairs, community outreach events, job information sessions, training sessions, resource sharing and more.



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION RESOURCES

STATE LAW LIBRARY MATERIALS

The State Law Library maintains a growing list of diversity and inclusion materials each year in the [Diversity Bibliography](#). In addition to the numerous scholarly articles sent to a listserv for Judicial Branch employees and judges, information on this site includes links to sources concerning diversity and inclusion in both the workplace and in the courts.



JUDICIAL BRANCH COURTNET SITE

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

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

MINNESOTA COMPASS

[Minnesota Compass](#) provides demographic information compiled from the U.S. Census and the American Communities Survey on topic areas such as education, economy and workforce, health, housing, public safety among others. Tracking trends and measuring progress on issues that impact the quality of life helps to make informed decisions about important issues in our state.

RECRUITMENT

The Minnesota Judicial Branch participated in the 2015 Hmong Resource Fair and University of Minnesota Government Job Fair among other events. Plans for furthering recruitment efforts in 2016 will take place to recruit, hire, retain and promote the best and brightest talent that is also reflective of the communities we serve.

Employees speak to school groups ranging from grade school through college and take part in programs like Everybody Wins which help introduce youth to persons working in the courts. Human Resources and Development staff from the State Court Administrator's Office also took part in Step-Up Mock Interviews in the Spring of 2015 to help plant seeds in the lives of high school students.



If you have any questions about this report or other diversity-related matters, please contact:
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For more information visit: www.mncourts.gov/cej