



**MINNESOTA
JUDICIAL BRANCH**

**Diversity and Inclusion
Annual Report**

January - December 2016



State Court Administrator's Office

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

2016 MINNESOTA JUDICIAL BRANCH DIVERSITY & INCLUSION ANNUAL REPORT

THE COMMITTEE FOR EQUALITY AND JUSTICE

The Committee for Equality and Justice (CEJ) is an advisory committee to the [Minnesota Judicial Council](#). The CEJ is comprised of representatives from each of the 10 Judicial District Equal Justice Committees (EJCs), as well as judicial officers, attorneys, court employees, and members of the public from across the state, reflective of the state's geographic and demographic diversity.

The CEJ updated its mission and charge in 2016 in response to the goals and initiatives of the [Minnesota Judicial Branch Strategic Plan](#) and to reflect the ongoing work of the Committee.

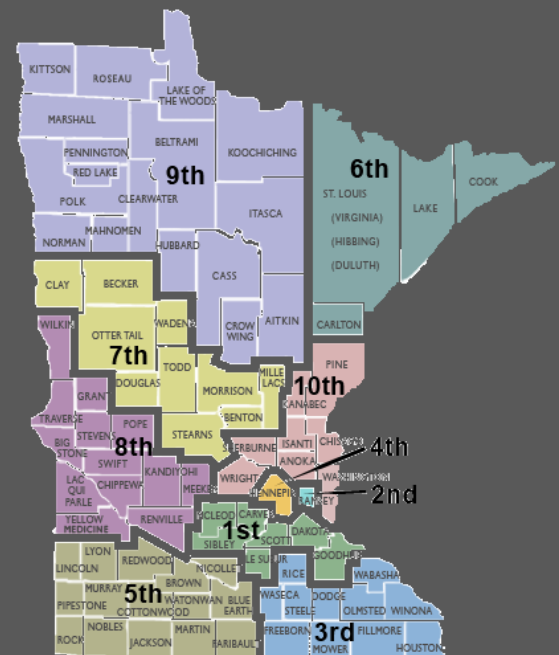
Mission: "To work collaboratively across the Judicial Branch to advance efforts to eliminate bias from court operations, promote equal access to the court, and inspire a high level of trust and public confidence in the Minnesota Judicial Branch."

To accomplish this mission, the CEJ is charged with:

- Recommending diversity and inclusion education programs and course materials for judges and Judicial Branch employees;
- Promoting diversity and inclusion in Judicial Branch employment and in appointments to Judicial Branch committees and boards to reflect the population served by the Judicial Branch;
- Making recommendations for improvement in court processes, procedures and policies as they relate to race, gender, ethnicity, age, disability, socioeconomic status, religion, sexual orientation, and any other status protected by law; and
- Assisting district Equal Justice Committees in their work at the local level, and providing assistance in outreach efforts to the communities they serve.

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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

Members of the CEJ and EJs attended the 28th annual National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts (NCREFC) conference in Williamsburg, VA, from May 25 to 28, 2016. The theme for the 2016 conference was “Courts Engaging Communities: Building Trust and Increasing Confidence.”

Conference participants gain insights, learn about state court trends and share successes with other state court systems from across the nation.

NCREFC is the oldest and largest national entity devoted to enhancing racial, ethnic and language access in the state courts.



2016 COMMITTEE FOR EQUALITY AND JUSTICE



STRATEGIC GOALS AND SUBCOMMITTEES

The CEJ condensed its mission and charge in 2016 to provide more focus and impact in its efforts in increasing access to justice for all court users. The CEJ also implemented goals developed from [FY16-17 Minnesota Judicial Branch Strategic Plan](#). For each of three goals, a subcommittee was formed to continue the work set out by the Judicial Council for the current biennium in 2016:

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

SELF-REPORTED RACE DATA

CEJ staff members provided presentations on race data to all 10 judicial districts through attending meetings with EJs, judges, and court administrators. Data shared included collection rates, adult criminal filings, and dispositions on defendants in pretrial custody throughout FY16-17. Collecting statistically significant race data is a critical component in ensuring equal treatment of court users. The Minnesota Judicial Branch has required self-reported race data collection in all criminal, delinquency, children in need of protective services, and traffic cases with a court appearance since 2001. Resources have been developed to help courts maintain a high collection rate.



COMMITTEE FOR EQUALITY AND JUSTICE HIGHLIGHTS AND EQUAL JUSTICE COMMITTEES

EQUAL JUSTICE COMMITTEES

Equal Justice committees (EJCs) are active in each of the 10 judicial districts across the state. Their purpose is to advance equality and promote multicultural understanding and competency among judicial officers, court employees, and local justice system partners.

EJCs are comprised of judicial officers, court employees, law enforcement, attorneys, and community members and/or community organizations who meet frequently on local access to justice topics.

Each EJC has a representative who serves on the Committee for Equality and Justice to provide input, share best practices, and help implement statewide goals and initiatives across the Judicial Branch.

COMMUNITY DIALOGUES

As a part of the FY16-17 Minnesota Judicial Branch Strategic Plan, each EJC was tasked with conducting at least one Community Dialogue in its district by June 2017. These community discussions are key for the courts to be informed on barriers to justice from community members, learn from individuals' experiences in court, and build a relationship between judges and members of the public. Having a two-way discussion helps promote greater trust and public confidence in the justice system.

Each EJC is as unique as the local issues and topics that arise for discussion and action. Community Dialogue reports and more information can be found on the [Committee for Equality and Justice public website](#).

TRANSLATED FORMS AND DOCUMENTS

The Minnesota Judicial Branch Court Interpreter Program and Language Access Services have worked to make improvements to translated forms and documents for Limited English Proficient court users.

The public and the courts can access forms and documents from select non-English languages on the [Minnesota Judicial Branch public website](#).



JUDICIAL DISTRICT AND EQUAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS

FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT

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

The First Judicial District held an all-staff training from State Court Administration on self-reported race data titled, "Why Race Data Matters." The session gave an overview of race data for criminal and juvenile cases in the District. The presentation provided approximately 100 employees with information by county, and in comparison to that of the state courts as a whole. A similar presentation was made at the District's bench meeting for judicial officers, at a court management meeting, and for the First Judicial District Equal Justice Committee.

The First Judicial District issues a weekly human resources employee newsletter with a section created by the EJC titled, "Do You Know?" This section is devoted to diversity-related events occurring in the community and serves as a means to distribute other diversity-related news.



SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Ramsey County

The Second Judicial District Equal Justice Committee developed and conducted an Implicit Bias Seminar attended by more than 200 judges, prosecutors, and public defenders. This half-day seminar featured presentations by: Professor Rachel Godsil, the Director of Research of the Perception Institute and Seton Hall Law regarding the mind-science of implicit bias; and Judge Gayle Roberts, New York City Family Court, regarding strategies to recognize and address implicit biases. The seminar was followed by interactive sessions and open discussion with all participants. Second Judicial District judges also received a presentation from Project Remand on using the Ramsey County Pretrial Risk Assessment Tool later in the year.

THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT

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

In collaboration with the Diversity Council of Rochester, the Third Judicial District Equal Justice Committee held a Community Listening Session on April 28, 2016, in Rochester, MN. The purpose of the session was to listen to the perspectives of local underrepresented populations to learn what they believe the courts can do better to understand their experiences. Participants in the event candidly shared heartfelt emotions and stories.

On November 3, 2016, the EJC and the Diversity Council of Rochester came together again and held a follow-up Community Listening Session targeted at the same population. The intent of this session was to report back on the progress made on the court-related items the group raised in April and to have a dialogue about how the courts might address some of the areas of concern.



JUDICIAL DISTRICT AND EQUAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS

FOURTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Hennepin County



Many Fourth District judicial officers, leaders, and staff volunteers connected with the community in various capacities in 2016, including: working with students and youth groups; attending community programming to talk with adults about chemical dependency and other health topics; leading training throughout the legal community on diversity and inclusion-related topics; attending community discussions around art and film screenings, as well as connecting with other community organizations. The EJC conducted a Community Dialogue on August 10, 2016, as a follow up to the previous year's event. Major themes included the perception of judges by the public, family court concerns, the need for community engagement, and other topics.

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 EJC provided a presentation to judges with an overview on the Karen and Burmese communities in the region. The EJC will conduct a community dialogue with these groups in 2017.

FOURTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION EDUCATION

- Understanding Classism
- Understanding the Immigrant Experience
- Making Decisions in a Morally Diverse Workplace
- Fruitvale Station
- A Single Story
- Gray Area Thinking
- Bullying in the Workplace
- Bafa Bafa (cross-cultural diversity training)
- Slippery Slopes
- A Class Divided: The Identity Game
- Trans 101 in the Courts
- Confronting and Challenging the Stigma of Mental Illness
- Generational Diversity in the Workplace
- Mental Illness and Crisis De-escalation
- Together We Can Make it OK
- Between the World and Me: A Bench Bar Discussion
- A Primer on Tribal Courts
- A Discussion of Addiction
- Police Community Relations
- Common Diagnoses, Symptoms, and Medications to Enhance the Understanding of Mental Illnesses and Treatment



JUDICIAL DISTRICT AND EQUAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS

SIXTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Carlton, Cook, Lake, and St. Louis Counties

The Sixth Judicial District EJC held a Community Dialogue on October 29, 2016, at Denfeld High School in Duluth. Community members discussed issues of access to justice for families and children, the criminalization of poverty, assistance for self-represented litigants, and the presence of implicit bias.

The EJC was one of several sponsors of the Conflict Resolution Center's event titled, "We Are All Criminals." The program noted that one in four people in our population have a criminal record and that our criminal justice system tends to disproportionately punish poor communities and people of color. The event focused on the other 75% - those who have almost certainly done something that could have resulted in a criminal record, but who did not get caught.



SEVENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

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



The Seventh Judicial District EJC hosted two Community Dialogues in 2016: May 2 and May 21, both in St. Cloud. The first event, "Our Kids. Our Future. A Community Conversation," took place in partnership with the St. Cloud Public Schools, various members of the Stearns County justice system, and community organizations. It featured presentations on school truancy, teenage chemical abuse, and the dangers of social media at St. Cloud Technical High School.

The May 21 Community Dialogue was held in conjunction with the St. Cloud branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Attendees shared concerns about being treated fairly in court and immigration issues.

EIGHTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

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

The Eighth Judicial District Equal Justice Committee worked on reforming its membership in 2016 and plans to hold a community dialogue in 2017.



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 focused on addressing issues presented in race data and discussed pretrial release considerations in 2016. They also worked on how to best equip judicial officers and court employees to work with court users who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

The EJC conducted a Community Dialogue at the Northwest American Indian Center in Bemidji. Community members shared concerns about issues important to the American Indian community and how the state and tribal courts can best collaborate. The District also celebrated the ten-year anniversary of the Wellness Court at the Tribal Justice Center (Leech Lake, Cass, and Itasca counties) in 2016.

Ninth Judicial District Chief Judge Benshoof presented at the District's Employee Wellness Days on the topic of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness in the spring. A second all-staff wellness training was held in the fall titled: "Inspired to Stay Positive/ Appreciating Differences." The training included presentations on staying positive when facing barriers and on generational differences.



TENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

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

Anoka County Court Administration hosted a "Why Culture Matters" all-employee training in 2016 conducted by the State Court Administration Diversity Specialist. This event gave employees the opportunity to learn about and discuss the impact and definition of culture and how it affects interactions with court users and co-workers.

The District also held an Ask-a-Lawyer event, which provided access to the courts for those who had civil cases and generally cannot afford an attorney.

The [Tenth Judicial District EJC](#) will hold a Community Dialogue in 2017 with a focus on racial bias.



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION EDUCATION

JUDICIAL EDUCATION

Through judicial education programs such as the Annual Conference of Judges, the Minnesota District Judges Foundation (MDJF), and Bench Retreats, judicial officers receive a variety of diversity and inclusion-related educational opportunities:

Topics in 2016 included:

- Cultural Issues and Fairness in Domestic Violence Cases
- Practical Solutions for Reducing the Impact of Implicit Bias
- Mentally Ill Parties - Interaction Advice and Best Practices for Judges
- Responding to Mental Illness in Minnesota Courts
- Judicial Decision Making - Discussion about the books, "The Enemy" and "The Shadow Line"

IMPLICIT BIAS EDUCATION

Implicit bias education is provided to judicial officers and employees through judicial education programs and Cultural Perspectives. In addition, the Minnesota Judicial Branch's Implicit Bias Bench Cards were re-distributed to judicial officers during a training in 2016. The bench card is the first of its kind nationwide and addresses the potential for unconscious bias at various decision points in the court process.

EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Providing opportunities for Minnesota Judicial Branch employees and judicial officers to learn more about diversity and inclusion-related topics helps equip individuals with the best customer service skills and helps to foster public trust and confidence.

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

CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

Cultural Perspectives sessions take place four times a year and focus on various historical, cultural, and societal issues from various communities. These live, 90-minute webinars generally attract 200-300 attendees.

Topics in 2016 included:

- Understanding Elder Abuse
- Understanding the Impact of Culture in the Minnesota Courts
- Understanding Microinequities
- Understanding Court Users Who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or DeafBlind

STATE LAW LIBRARY CLE EVENTS

The State Law Library hosted a [Why Treaties Matter](#) exhibit and provided five CLE events related to diversity and inclusion in 2016, which included:

- Indian Child Welfare Act 101
- Tribal Sovereignty and Tribal Courts
- Hmong Americans and the Legal System in Minnesota
- Tribal Court Jurisdiction after Dollar General
- Minnesota's Safe Harbor Law



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION EDUCATION

ADDITIONAL EMPLOYEE EDUCATION

Through continuing education, court employees gain valuable information on serving court users who are Limited English Proficient, as well as on how to best assist court users who have a disability through on-demand course offerings.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) RESOURCES

The Minnesota Judicial Branch provides education on ADA resources and best practices for judicial officers and employees.

The [Minnesota Judicial Branch ADA public website](#) contains resources to help court users request an ADA accommodation. The courts strive to make reasonable accommodations for court users with disabilities.

On this site, members of the public can access:

- ADA Accommodation Request form (electronic and paper)
- Grievance Form (electronic and paper)
- List of ADA contacts at each court location

LANGUAGE ACCESS RESOURCES

In partnership with the New Mexico State Courts and the State Justice Institute, the Minnesota Judicial Branch offers employees Language Access Basic Training (LABT).

In 2016, the Minnesota Judicial Branch replaced the individual county language access plans with a new statewide, Minnesota Judicial Branch [Language Access Plan](#). Moving to one comprehensive plan ensures consistency in providing language access services in more than 87 court locations across Minnesota.

MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF COURT MANAGEMENT

The 2016 Minnesota Association of Court Management Conference included the following diversity-related sessions:

- Leading With an Inclusive Lens
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing in the Judicial System
- Analyzing Commonalities Between Generations
- Lessons Learned from Ferguson
- Navigating Cultural Intersections: When Individual, Organizational, and Team Cultures Collide

Strength lies in differences, not in similarities.

Stephen R. Covey



GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

The Minnesota Judicial Branch participated in the groups and committees listed below to help gain best practices, build connections, and increase cultural competency to better understand each other and court users.

THE FORUM ON WORKPLACE INCLUSION

[The Forum on Workplace Inclusion](#) is the nation's largest diversity and inclusion conference. This three-day event focuses on cutting-edge learning, interactive discussions, and lasting connections between and amongst leaders from across the country and from around the globe.

TWIN CITIES DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ROUNDTABLE (TCDIR)

The Twin Cities Diversity and Inclusion Roundtable meets bi-monthly and consists of representatives from local public, private, and non-profit sectors. Diversity and inclusion practitioners from these various industries share best practices and learn from speakers and one another to bring valuable workforce diversity-related issues information back to their organizations and employers.

STATE GOVERNMENT GROUPS

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

The Minnesota Judicial Branch also participates in ACCESS: a workgroup of employees focused on diversity and inclusion from 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 COMMUNITY ADVISORS ON RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION SOLUTIONS (MnCARRS)

[MnCARRS](#) partners serve as the bridge between diverse communities and the State of Minnesota. MnCARRS partners meet on a quarterly basis to advise state government 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.

MnCARRS is a partnership between agencies within the State of Minnesota and leaders of organizations representing minority communities, women, veterans, and people with disabilities.



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION RESOURCES

RECRUITMENT

Recruitment of employees who reflect the communities served by the courts is crucial to help promote public trust and confidence, as well as to meet the rising demands of the state's competition for talent.

In 2016, the Minnesota Judicial Branch participated in University of Minnesota and Minnesota Private College Job and Internship Fairs that attracted nearly 4,000 students combined. In addition, the Judicial Branch recruitment brochures are shared at the statewide community dialogues conducted by the EJsCs.

The Human Resources and Development staff from across the Judicial Branch have increased efforts to send job postings to various networks of colleges, universities, affinity bar associations, and community organizations. The Sixth Judicial District also sends postings to the Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College and to the Fond du Lac Band. The First Judicial District also began sending open job postings to the Workforce Community email listserv through the State of Minnesota, which reaches more than 500 diversity contacts.

To help build the pipeline of future court employees, the Fourth Judicial District developed an internship program that included 10 college students. Other districts host student workers and interns across the state as well. Judicial officers and employees often speak to groups about careers from K-12 schools, the YMCA's Youth in Government, the Girl Scouts, and beyond.

STATE DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The Minnesota Judicial Branch continues to rely on the state demographer as well as [Minnesota Compass](#) to obtain and analyze data from the U.S. Census and the American Communities Survey. These sources provide key information to help inform the courts on the changing region.



STATE LAW LIBRARY MATERIALS

The State Law Library prepares and updates a list of diversity and inclusion publications each year as a part of a [Diversity Bibliography](#). Judicial Branch judicial officers and employees have access to scholarly journals via a listserv; this source also contains links to information on other diversity and inclusion resources.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION INTRANET SITE

The Minnesota Judicial Branch Diversity and Inclusion website is an intranet repository for information on events and educational resources for judicial officers and court employees, including:

- Calendar of ongoing events and holidays
- Links for various groups and cultures
- Minnesota Judicial Branch's diversity statement
- Diversity and inclusion efforts and resources
- Training and education

With questions about this report or other diversity-related matters, please contact:
Melanie Larsen Sinouhasy, SCAO Human Resources Diversity Specialist and
Coordinator for the Committee for Equality & Justice.
For more information visit: www.mncourts.gov/cej