



MINNESOTA JUDICIAL BRANCH

First Judicial District

Mission: To provide justice through a system that assures equal access for the fair and timely resolution of cases and controversies.

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[First Judicial District Public Website](#)

The First District has 36 judges and 250 staff who handled more than 90,000 cases in 2021 in the counties of Carver, Dakota, Goodhue, Le Sueur, McLeod, Scott, and Sibley.

The First Edition

A Newsletter about the First Judicial District of the State of Minnesota

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First Judicial District Implements Digital Exhibit Management System *User-friendly web-based portal securely stores and manages multimedia digital exhibits*

On September 12, 2022, the First Judicial District implemented a new web-based application that puts users in control of managing their digital exhibits. The Minnesota Digital Exhibit System (MNDES) provides a secure tool for users to upload digital exhibits and then access and review them without visiting a courthouse or relying on court staff.

“The Minnesota Judicial Branch is committed to leveraging technology and innovation to provide a secure, consistent, and quality experience for people to interact with the courts and to improve court efficiencies,” said Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea. “MNDES is one example of the advancements our courts are making to operate in an increasingly digital environment.”

MNDES accommodates most modern evidence formats, including audio and video files, images, and documents. The exhibits are stored in a secure platform and are not directly accessible by or visible to the public. The new application provides many benefits to external court users, judges, and court staff, including:

- Attorneys and self-represented litigants can upload and manage their exhibits from anywhere and can share exhibits with anyone with an email or smartphone.

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First Judicial District Implements Digital Exhibit Management System

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- Parties can display exhibits during remote and in-person court hearings.
- Court clerks can manage exhibits virtually.
- Judges can access exhibits and make notes as needed within the platform.
- Courts can utilize chain-of-custody tracking and other features to manage exhibits securely.
- In the near future, jurors will be able to view digital exhibits during deliberations.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch first launched MNDES in May of 2022. Since its launch, several enhancements have been made to improve the user experience, including new functionality that provides more options to view and search exhibits from the portal.

Statewide expansion of MNDES is being phased in through 2022. An implementation timeline, recorded training, and instructional documents on the new application are available on the [MNDES page](#) of the Judicial Branch website.



Patrick Cotter and Dana McKenzie Receive First Judicial District Amicus Curiae Award



On August 12, 2022, the First Judicial District awarded its 12th annual Amicus Curiae Awards to Patrick Cotter and Dana McKenzie. The Amicus Curiae Award (Friend of the Court) is an annual recognition of persons who have provided exceptional service, leadership, or other contributions to assist the First Judicial District in the administration of justice.

Patrick Cotter is the President of the Dakota County Bar Association (DCBA) and the President of the Minnesota Association for Criminal Defense Lawyers (MACDL). He volunteers as a judge in Dakota County presiding over conciliation court cases, and volunteers for Legal Assistance of Dakota County (LADC) assisting individuals and children who are victims of domestic abuse. He dedicates countless hours to the DCBA and events

supporting legal aid and the bar.

Dana McKenzie is extensively involved in the DCBA and spends many hours putting together the Dakota County Bar Association Holiday Party, which raises money for LADC. She is dedicated to ensuring that LADC can continue to help disadvantaged residents of Dakota County seeking legal assistance. She also publishes a private family law blog with over 900 subscribers in the Minnesota bench, bar, and family law community.

“Patrick and Dana are receiving the Amicus Curiae Award due to the substantial amount of time and effort they put into running the Bar Association and raising funds to support Legal Assistance of Dakota County,” said First District Judge Michael Mayer. “They dedicate significant portions of their practice to ensuring that disadvantaged people who do not have the money to hire an attorney are served. Patrick and Dana make our county and our legal system a better place to be.”

Patrick Cotter, J.D., practices in the areas of personal injury and criminal defense with the law firm of Sieben & Cotter. He earned his bachelor’s degree cum laude from the University of



*Patrick Cotter and Dana McKenzie
Receive First Judicial District Amicus Curiae Award*

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St. Thomas in 1997 and his law degree from William Mitchell College of Law in 2002.

Dana K. McKenzie, J.D., C.H.C., C.H.P.C., is a founding partner and shareholder of Cheney-Hatcher & McKenzie Dispute Resolution Center, P.L.L.C. In addition to her mediation and collaborative law practice, she serves as a financial and social early neutral evaluator, parenting consultant, and custody evaluator. She is a 1989 graduate of the University of Missouri at Kansas City School of Law and a 1985 graduate of Northern Michigan University.

Past recipients of the Amicus Curiae Award include Liz Reppe, Dana McKenzie, Merlyn Meinerts, Mary Freyberg, the law firm of Lindquist & Vennum, Sharon Freiling, Karissa Richardson, Dan Beeson, Wayne Jagow, Lloyd Moosbrugger, Bob Morris, Jerome Wickert, Mary Stapleton, Chuck Brill, Manual Roman, Molly Trieschman, Fredrikson & Byron Law Firm, Bridget McCauley Nason, Dakota County Bar Association, Tanya Derby, State Guardian Ad Litem Program, Katie Moras, James Kretsch Jr., Steven Pattee, Markus Yira, and Lisa Vandelist.

Hearing and Judgment Search Now Available through Minnesota Court Records Online (MCRO)

The Minnesota Judicial Branch announced two new search functions have been added to [Minnesota Court Records Online](#) (MCRO). A Hearing Search now allows users to search for individual court hearings, and a Judgment Search allows users to search for docketed monetary judgments and related information.

MCRO is an online platform for public access to state district court records and documents, allowing the public to search for and retrieve public court documents without having to go to a court facility or the State Law Library. Since its launch in March 2021, more than seven million district court case documents have been downloaded through the application, with nearly 800 new downloads occurring every hour.

“When the Minnesota Judicial Branch set out to develop a fully-functional remote access product for court records and documents, our goal was to

increase access, transparency, and convenience in our court system,” said Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea. “MCRO is one of the most notable innovations of the Judicial Branch, and it is effectively meeting the high demand for information in a manner that is accessible and responsive to the people we serve.”

MCRO has been well-received by the public and attorneys. In June, the application received the [President's Award from the Minnesota State Bar Association](#) for providing outstanding support and assistance to the legal profession.

Implementation of MCRO Access Fee Suspended

The Minnesota Judicial Branch had initially planned to apply an \$8 access fee to view, download, or print uncertified digital court documents longer than one page through MCRO once this phase of the project was complete. That fee would be the same amount as the fee for copies of uncertified court documents at courthouses, per [Minn. Stat. § 357.021, subd. 2\(2\)](#), with all revenue generated being deposited into the state's General Fund.

During the 2022 Legislative Session,



Hearing and Judgment Search Now Available through Minnesota Court Records Online (MCRO)

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both the Minnesota House of Representatives and the Minnesota Senate approved legislation to eliminate the statutory fee on uncertified copies of court documents online through MCRO and at a courthouse. However, the proposals were included in broader omnibus bills that were not passed into law.

“Given the bipartisan support for eliminating the fee on uncertified copies, the Minnesota Judicial Branch is suspending the implementation of the access fee in MCRO to give the Minnesota Legislature more time to address the issue in the 2023 Legislative Session,” said Jeff Shorba, State Court Administrator.

The statutory fee on uncertified copies of court documents printed at courthouses and from court administration remains in effect.



First Judicial District Judge Jamie Cork Appointed to National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

First Judicial District Judge Jamie Cork has been appointed to the Board of Directors for the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ).

The NCJFCJ began in 1937 to improve the effectiveness of the nation's juvenile courts. Its mission is to provide all judges, courts, and related agencies involved with juvenile, family, and domestic violence cases with the knowledge and skills to improve the lives of the families and children who seek justice.

“I am not only honored, but extremely excited, to have been appointed to the Board of Directors for the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges,” said Judge Cork. “The vision of the Council is for a society in which every family and child has access to fair, equal, effective, and timely justice. This is a vision I share and have spent my career striving to accomplish.

The welfare of our children and families is near and dear to my heart. I look forward to working with the esteemed colleagues I am joining on the Board of Directors, and all of the members of the Council, to make this vision come true.”

As one of the nation's largest and oldest judicial membership organizations, the NCJFCJ serves an estimated 30,000 juvenile and family justice professionals, including judges, referees, commissioners, court masters and administrators, social and mental health workers, police, and probation officers.

About Judge Cork

Judge Cork was appointed to the First Judicial District Bench in August 2016. She co-chairs the Dakota County Domestic Violence Coordinated Community Response Team and the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative Elimination of Racial Bias Committee.

Judge Cork is also an active member of the First District Equal Justice Committee, the Minnesota Children's Justice Initiative (CJI), the CJI Indian Child Welfare Act training faculty and subcommittee, and the CJI Parent Representation subcommittee. She is also an adjunct professor at the University of Minnesota Law School and the University of St. Thomas Law School.



First Judicial District Judge Jamie Cork Appointed to National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

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Before being appointed as a judge, Judge Cork served as an Assistant Hennepin County Attorney. She worked for over 18 years in the Child Protection Division there, specializing in Sexually Exploited Youth and Indian Child Welfare Act cases. Judge Cork worked with Indian tribes and communities to ensure that families and children could obtain culturally-appropriate education and services.

Judge Cork helped to establish Minnesota statewide policy, training, and community outreach regarding the

sexual exploitation of youth. She was an original member of the Safe Harbor Legislation committee that established Minnesota's "No Wrong Door" policy, and she co-chaired the Statewide Model Protocol Workgroup on Child Protection/Welfare. She has brought awareness and education about human trafficking through local, state, national, and international presentations to judges, attorneys, law enforcement, and other professionals.

Minnesota Supreme Court Convenes at Shakopee High School

The Minnesota Supreme Court convened at Shakopee High School on October 11, 2022, as part of a biannual program that seeks to teach students about the court system and build the public's trust and confidence in the Judicial Branch. The Court was hosted by the Human Services Academy of Shakopee High School.

The state's highest court heard oral arguments of an actual case, *State of Minnesota v. Michael Phillip Cloutier* (Case No. A21-1270), in front of nearly 800 Shakopee High School students and special guests. The event was also streamed by the Shakopee School District on Sabers Live.

Following the oral arguments, members of the Court held a question-and-answer session with the students in attendance. In the afternoon, the Court and their student ambassadors were treated to a lunch prepared by culinary arts students and some justices stayed on campus visiting classrooms to talk more about their role as a justice.

In the week prior to the event, Supreme Court Historical Society Education Committee members, including Senior Judge Jill Halbrooks, visited the school to prepare students for the oral argument process and the case that was before the Court.

The Shakopee High School visit marks the 51st in-school oral argument for the Court.



The Minnesota Supreme Court hears oral arguments at Shakopee High School



Five Minnesota Judicial Branch Employees Receive 2022 Minnesota Association for Court Management (MACM) Awards

Five Minnesota Judicial Branch employees were honored for their professional expertise and contributions to the teams and workplaces they serve at the recent [Minnesota Association for Court Management](#) (MACM) conference.

- **Abby Gilmore**, Wabasha County Court Administrator, Third Judicial District – Early Career Excellence Award
- **Kaitlin Schwab**, Court Operations Supervisor, Fifth Judicial District – Coach/Mentor of the Year Award
- **Meghan Knapp**, Accounting Manager, First Judicial District – Champion of Change Award
- **Mary Dilla**, Supervising Attorney, Fourth Judicial District – Distinguished Service Award
- **Jeri Boetcher**, Human Resources Manager, First Judicial District – Lifetime Achievement Award

Abby Gilmore, Wabasha County Court Administrator in the Third Judicial District, received the Early Career Excellence Award. The Award recognizes an individual who demonstrates achievement in the courts by obtaining a high level of knowledge in a short amount of time, is a valuable resource to others, and demonstrates outstanding leadership by considering stakeholders when making decisions.

Gilmore has served as the Wabasha County Court Administrator since April 2020. Her leadership and ability to work effectively with others help ensure high-quality, convenient, and consistent service. Gilmore is recognized as an exceptionally quick learner and strong communicator who builds cohesive, high-functioning staff teams and maintains collaborative relationships with justice partners. Her ability to build trust and willingness to take on new challenges was called upon when the Judicial Branch was developing a Minnesota Interpreter Scheduling Spe-

cialist Team. She helped lead the effort to create and implement this new statewide Team, which will produce greater efficiency, enhanced interpreter scheduler backup support, and more efficient and cost-effective use of employee interpreters.

Gilmore worked as a Court Operations Associate in Olmsted County from 2014 to 2016, and as a Lead Worker in Olmsted County from 2018 to 2020. She is a member of the Third District Administrative Team, the Innovative Leadership Workgroup, the River Region Workgroup, and the Talent Centric Workgroup.

Kaitlin Schwab, Court Operations Supervisor for the Fifth Judicial District Document Acceptance Team, was awarded the Coach/Mentor of the Year Award. The Award recognizes an individual who fosters trust while encouraging others to achieve their goals without thought of reciprocation.



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During her three-and-a-half years as a Court Operations Supervisor, Schwab created a team of five full-time staff to manage document acceptance and support for local court administrations.

She is recognized as a proactive leader and strong communicator with a keen eye for detail. Schwab strongly advocates for continuous improvement and has consistently identified ways to improve data quality, document security, and efficiency. Her willingness to help staff learn and grow in their jobs has fostered a motivated and productive team.

Schwab first joined the Minnesota Judicial Branch as a Court Operations Associate in 2015 before being promoted to her current position in 2019. She serves on the Statewide Document Security Oversight Team, is the secretary for the Fifth District Court Administrative Team, and is a member of the Minnesota Association for Court Management.

Meghan Knapp, Accounting Manager for the First Judicial District, was honored as the Champion of Change. This award recognizes an individual who fosters collaboration to promote innovation by embracing opportunities

to utilize technology and other resources to increase efficiencies and productivity in the workplace.

Knapp is a positive and persistent change advocate. Her diverse work background has been instrumental in designing and implementing efficient and effective financial processes for the First Judicial District and the Minnesota Judicial Branch. Knapp is recognized for her extensive knowledge of financial policies and procedures, her positive attitude, and her ability to keep staff well-informed on new processes and resources. Her commitment to achieving accuracy and instituting beneficial change has led to her serving in key roles on such teams as the eFinance pilot project, the Statewide Accounting Workgroup, the Management Database Workgroup, and the Senior Judge Electronic Timesheet Workgroup.

Knapp joined the Judicial Branch in 2008 as an Office Assistant and has served in various administrative and financial roles in the First Judicial District since 2011. She serves on the First District Administration Management Office Team and the First District Senior Administration Team. She is also a member of the Minnesota Asso-

ciation for Court Management, serving as treasurer.

Mary Dilla, Supervising Attorney in the Family Justice Center Self-Help Center in the Fourth Judicial District, received the Distinguished Service Award. The Award recognizes an individual with a record of outstanding service to the community and the courts, and demonstrates leadership by improving the administration of justice and delivery of public service through modern management techniques.

A 26-year employee of the Minnesota Judicial Branch, Dilla embodies outstanding service to the Fourth Judicial District and the Hennepin County community. She puts learning into action and consistently demonstrates a commitment to improving the administration of justice. Dilla has extensive legal and court-related knowledge and experience working in Family Court proceedings. With a focus on collaboration and problem-solving, she has worked to provide access to justice for self-represented litigants, streamline processes, address challenges, and help ensure a seamless experience for litigants, external stakeholders, judicial officers, and court staff.



Five Minnesota Judicial Branch Employees Receive 2022 Minnesota Association for Court Management (MACM) Awards

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Dilla has also strived to address larger issues impacting the community and take tangible steps toward meaningful improvements. She is a member of the Racial Equity Strategic Leadership Team in the Fourth Judicial District, and collaborates with the District's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Office to bring together a community of leaders to guide the elevation, impact, and sustainability of work that advances racial equity in the Fourth Judicial District.

Recognized throughout her career for her insightful contributions to various committees and workgroups, Dilla has been involved in the Self-Help Center Collaborative Leadership Group, the Self-Help Center Workgroup, the National Self-Represented Litigation Network, and the Minnesota Association for Court Management. She has also served on the Family Court Enhancement Program, the Volunteer Lawyer's Network Family Law Committee, and Justice for Families.

Jeri Boetcher, Human Resources Manager in the First Judicial District, received the 2022 Lifetime Achievement Award. The Award honors a recipient's many contributions to the court management profession and years of service to the Judicial Branch.

In her 35 years of service to the Minnesota Judicial Branch, Boetcher has been a visionary change agent and vigorous

proponent of customer service. Her deep commitment to education, training, and a learning environment has helped create a legacy of people who will serve the public well for years to come. Boetcher goes above and beyond the requirements of her position to foster relationships, mentor staff, and recognize people for excellent work.

Boetcher is an Institute of Court Management Fellow, Certified Court Executive, and Certified Court Manager with the National Conference on State Courts. She is also a member of the National Association for Court Management, the Minnesota Association for Court Management, the State Human Resources Management Team, the State Education Committee, the State Classification Appeal Revenue Panel, the First District Senior Administration Team, the First District Administration Office Management Team, the First District Equal Justice Committee, the First District Teamsters CAT Labor Management Committee, and the First District Court Reporter Labor Management Committee.



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