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TO: Appellate Division Judges
Superior Court Judges
Tax Court Judges
Municipal Court Presiding Judges
Trial Court Administrators

FROM: Glenn A. Grant, J.A.D. 

SUBJ: New Jersey Judiciary Enhanced Training and Education Initiative

DATE: July 17, 2019

I am establishing under the direction of the Chief Justice and the Supreme Court the "Judiciary Enhanced Education and Training Initiative." The program will focus on an enhancement of existing training for judges in the areas of sexual assault, domestic violence, implicit bias, and diversity.

Judicial education in New Jersey is extensive, purposeful, and continuously refined based on changes in law and the evolving needs of our bench and society. For decades, judges have been required to participate in mandatory training from initial appointment through the balance of their careers, and in retirement if appointed to recall status.

Hundreds of Superior Court and Municipal Court judges fairly and justly adjudicate millions of matters in New Jersey courts each year, performing their work with devotion to fairness and justice while maintaining the highest standards of professionalism. Judges serve as independent arbiters of disputes while balancing the rights and protections of all participants.

That does not mean that we do not continue to improve, especially when particular events prompt us to engage in critical self-analysis that suggests the need to do more to instill the Judiciary's longstanding guiding policies and principles into our daily practices.

To build on our Judiciary's strong foundation and commitment to training, within the next 90 days the courts will recess by order of the Chief Justice for the purpose of conducting a mandatory full-day educational conference focusing on sexual assault, domestic violence, implicit bias and diversity.

Superior Court judges (including all recall judges), Tax Court judges, Appellate Division judges, and Supreme Court justices will participate in this training session. A similar mandatory training will be scheduled for all Municipal Court judges, to be conducted within 120 days. Both training sessions will be held every two years thereafter.

These statewide education conferences will serve to enhance understanding of the complexities and nuances associated with sexual assault, sex offenses, and domestic violence matters and to raise awareness of the impact of implicit bias on decision-making, while providing skills for judges to recognize and respond to their preconceptions. The programs also will train judges in effective communication skills that will aid them in delivering clear decisions that are rooted in the law, respectful of victims, and understandable to the public while protecting the rights of the accused.

In addition to the statewide education conferences, within six months, and annually thereafter, each vicinage will hold local training sessions for judges to ensure that local court environments reflect and support our Judiciary-wide values. This annual training, developed in partnership with local subject matter experts, also will be mandatory for all judges. Judiciary staff will receive similar mandatory training.

The Administrative Office of the Courts will establish an online portal by which members of the public can provide anonymous feedback on their court experiences. This will supplement the work already done by assignment judges, trial court administrators, and ombudsmen in receiving and addressing concerns raised by the public and will broaden the avenues for input on our court system.

Along with this additional training, the Judiciary will continue to focus on these and other topics in its current mandatory training programs. As noted above, these training events have included courses on sexual assault and sexual violence, domestic violence, juvenile matters, and judicial ethics and demeanor. Among them are the following:

- **The Comprehensive Judicial Orientation Program.** Training for newly-appointed or reassigned judges in all aspects of the division they are entering.
- **The New Judge Orientation Program.** Advanced level training for newly-appointed and reassigned judges.
- **Judicial College.** Annual three-day intensive training conference for all state-level judges and justices that enlists the expertise of professionals from across the country.
- **Annual Municipal Court Conference.** Advanced one-day training for all Municipal Court judges on all aspects of municipal court practice and standards of judicial conduct.

- **Education Conferences.** Annual division-specific training for all judges in the trial divisions.

This directive sets forth enhanced educational and training requirements for our judges. It increases our partnerships with the experts on these topics and allows for feedback from the public. Through the combination of new and existing training and the continued assessment of our performance and refinement of our methods, the New Jersey Judiciary will live up to the commitment expressed in its Mission Statement to “earn the respect and confidence of an informed public.”

cc: Chief Justice Stuart Rabner
Supreme Court Justices
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