



Judicial Council of California

455 Golden Gate Avenue · San Francisco, California 94102-3688

www.courts.ca.gov

REPORT TO THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Item No.: 24-046

For business meeting on January 19, 2024

Title

Access and Fairness: Racial Justice Toolkit
for Judicial Officers and Court Staff

Agenda Item Type

Information Only

Date of Report

December 19, 2023

Submitted by

Advisory Committee on Providing Access
and Fairness

Hon. Kevin C. Brazile, Cochair

Hon. Victor A. Rodriguez, Cochair

Contact

Cristina Resendiz-Johnson, Attorney

415-865-4318

cristina.resendiz-johnson@jud.ca.gov

Gregory S. Tanaka, Supervising Attorney

415-865-7671

gregory.tanaka@jud.ca.gov

Executive Summary

The Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness, led by its Ad Hoc Racial Justice Working Group, conceived of and created a new online resource for courts entitled *The Racial Justice Toolkit*. The toolkit is a compilation of resources for bench officers, trial court leadership, and court staff to find guidance, as a launching point, to incorporate racial diversity, equity, and inclusion into their court operations; train and educate staff; develop and sustain a diverse workforce; build effective community partnerships; and increase public trust. The toolkit will be updated continuously as new information, data, and resources become available over time.

Relevant Previous Council Action

In response to the murder of George Floyd; increase in race-based hate crimes, particularly against the Asian American and Pacific Islander community; and outcry around the nation for racial justice reform, the Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness formed the Ad Hoc Racial Justice Working Group in 2021. The charge and purpose of the working group is to gather information on branchwide efforts related to racial justice and bias, work with

stakeholders in promoting those efforts, and consider recommendations to the committee on racial justice within the branch.¹

Analysis/Rationale

“The Strategic Plan for California’s Judicial Branch”

Goal I of the judicial branch strategic plan—Access, Fairness, Diversity, and Inclusion—states:

The branch must work to remove all barriers to access and fairness by being responsive to the state’s cultural, ethnic, socioeconomic, linguistic, physical, gender, sexual orientation, and age diversities, and to all people. Branch efforts in this regard must include ensuring that the courts are free from both bias and the appearance of bias... demonstrating inclusion and remaining receptive to the needs of all branch constituents, ensuring that court procedures are fair and understandable, and providing socially and culturally responsive programs and services. In addition, to serve the people of California effectively, public servants in the judicial branch should be representative of the diversity of the state’s population and continue efforts to enhance public trust and confidence by working with other branches of government toward a strongly diverse judiciary.²

The Racial Justice Toolkit promotes the advancement of Goal I by offering tangible resources for court leadership and staff to incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion into their court practices, partnerships, and programs. The toolkit functions as a starting point and online hub where courts can go to locate empirical studies, practice guides, and third-party affiliate links to local nonprofit organizations that are already engaged in racial justice initiatives in their communities.

Resources provided

The toolkit is organized into three categories that contain links to third-party sites and resources that provide additional information related to the specific topic. Each of the categories is then broken down into subcategories related to the overall category. On each page, before each category, is a brief description of the types of resources the user will find. When necessary, specific links also include brief descriptions that explain what the link itself will lead the user to. The categories are further described below.

Community Outreach

This category highlights the principle that court staff and professionals serve to create trust and transparency with court users and people who interact with the court system. It further

¹ Judicial Council of Cal., *Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness Annual Agenda*, www.courts.ca.gov/documents/paf-annual.pdf.

² California Courts, “The Strategic Plan for California’s Judicial Branch” (July 2019), p. 5, www.courts.ca.gov/documents/Strategic_Plan_Companion_2022.pdf.

encourages users to use the resources provided to explore ways to create positive and meaningful interactions with the public and their local community.

It is divided into three subcategories titled, Public Interactions at the Court, Responding to Public Concerns, and Potential Justice Partners. Under these subcategories, the toolkit user will find links to information related to ways the court interacts with the public, such as with townhall events, professional conferences, and training sources related to self-help centers. Lastly, under this category, users can also find information on a multitude of community nonprofit organizations, accredited educational institutions, and government-sponsored organizations that are dedicated to advancing racial justice initiatives and that a court may turn to for outreach as a potential justice partner.

Diversity in the Courts

This category is geared specifically toward court human resources staff or other court executives who not only are looking to add diversity to their court staff but are also seeking resources related to mentorship and increasing judicial diversity initiatives. This category also provides guidance for incorporating racial equity into a court's strategic plan.

Education

This category lays out specific resources related to implicit bias and cultural responsiveness, as it would apply for specific staff positions, such as bench officers, executive staff, or clerical staff.

Fiscal Impact and Policy Implications

Given the nature of the ever-evolving approach to and framework surrounding racial justice initiatives and diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, the committee anticipates continuing costs for council staff resources to update and revise the online Racial Justice Toolkit. This effort will occur through implementation, user testing, and routine site maintenance.

Attachments and Links

1. Link A: California Courts, Racial Justice Toolkit, <https://racialjustice-toolkit.courts.ca.gov/>