



Wisconsin Court System

Judicial Education

Under the rules of the Wisconsin Supreme Court, Wisconsin judges are required to meet compulsory continuing education requirements. Justices of the Supreme Court, judges of the Court of Appeals and circuit courts must earn 60 credits of approved judicial education during each six-year period they are on the bench. Reserve judge, municipal judges, and circuit court commissioners must meet similar continuing judicial education requirements. See Supreme Court Rules, Chapters 32,33 and 75.

The Office of Judicial Education, located within Director of State Courts' Office, acts as the "peer educator" for professionals in the judicial branch. The office plans and conducts educational seminars and training activities for Wisconsin judges, administers the course approval and credit reporting processes and regularly updates a number of reference and resource materials essential to members of the judiciary. Wisconsin's judicial branch education programs and administrative systems are recognized as among the best in the nation.

Judicial Education Programs

The Office of Judicial Education, working with the Judicial Education Committee composed of judges, organizes statewide educational activities throughout the year. In 2013, 1422 professionals attended 35.5 program days including the following:

The Judicial College: Held annually, the Judicial College focuses on the tools and techniques of judging. It is designed as an introduction to the bench for newly elected or appointed judges and a refresher for sitting judges, each of whom is required to attend the Judicial College at least once every period of six years. Sessions are interactive. Experienced judges' share their solutions to the new and recurring problems that arise in litigation and their insights on judicial decision making. Newer judges, more in touch with private, corporate or government practice, share their perspectives from the other side of the bench.

The Judicial Conference: Also held annually, usually in the fall, the Judicial Conference is attended by almost 300 Wisconsin judges. At the Judicial Conference the Chief Justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court delivers the annual State of the Judiciary Address. Judges also attend educational

presentations and participate in their annual business meeting and in workshops on timely topics affecting the judiciary and the judicial process.

Other programs: The Office of Judicial Education co-sponsors a number of annual programs on topics of continuing interest to judges and other court staff. These include the Clerks of Circuit Court Institute, the Evidence Workshop, the Family Law and Juvenile Law Seminars, and the Civil Law and Criminal Law Programs. One prison tour for judges and court staff is also held each year.

Special programs: One-time educational programs are also scheduled each year. For example, in 2013 the Office of Judicial Education sponsored an Appellate Specialty Training Workshop; Motivational Interviewing Seminar; Traffic Law; and a Joint Legislative and Judicial Symposium: The 4th Amendment and Emerging Communications and Tracking Technology.

Programs for municipal judges: Each new municipal judge is required to attend the municipal judge orientation institute held in May. Each sitting municipal judge must earn at least four credits of approved continuing education per calendar year. In

2013 the Office of Judicial Education sponsored five two-day municipal judge programs attended by 292 judges. In addition to the orientation institute, seminars on traffic and special topics were held. A one and a half day municipal court clerks seminar attended by 227 court clerks was also held in 2013.

Continuing Education Administration

The Office of Judicial Education is responsible for administering the mandatory judicial education requirement for the Wisconsin judiciary. Some administrative responsibilities of the office include reviewing and approving programs for credit, recording credits and issuing credit transcripts for Wisconsin judges and other court staff, notifying judges of their compliance or non-compliance with continuing judicial education requirements and providing sponsorship to judges attending training sessions out of state.

Reference and Resource Materials/Publications

Each year the Office of Judicial Education, with the guidance of five benchbook committees, revises and

updates each of five Wisconsin Judicial Benchbooks. Benchbooks are desktop procedural reference texts for trial judges, and it is essential that they be kept current. Wisconsin's benchbooks are divided as follows: Volume I - Criminal, Volume II - Civil, Volume III - Family, Volume IV - Juvenile, and Volume V - Probate and Mental Health.

The Office of Judicial Education also revises and updates a number of other court-related publications including: the Municipal Judge Benchbook, the Municipal Court Clerks Procedures Manual (a detailed description of clerks' duties and a compilation of municipal court forms) and the Municipal Court Directory which is available online. Through periodic newsletters and special alerts, the office also informs municipal judges about new legislation, new developments in other state agencies and important changes in the law that cannot await a scheduled Municipal Judge Benchbook update. In addition, the office has developed, and updates, a publication called "Starting a Municipal Court" that is available online and serves as a guide to communities that are interested in creating a municipal court.