



CENTER FOR JUDICIAL EXCELLENCE

Public Questionnaire Regarding the Court System

To the public and those most familiar with our courts: litigants, lawyers, experts, court reporters, concerned citizens, court personnel and employees:

The *Center for Judicial Excellence* invites you to share your experiences with the Courts by filling out our Public Questionnaire. The standardized format of the Questionnaire is intended to allow CJE to track trends in peoples' experiences with our Courts and eventually summarize and disseminate this information to the public.

The attached Public Questionnaire is for voluntary completion by members of the public who are familiar with the courts. We invite you to share with us the problems you perceive or have experienced in our courts, as well as your ideas about how we might work to resolve those problems.

Questionnaire responses can be e-mailed to us at info@centerforjudicialexcellence.org, faxed to 415-256-9606, or mailed to 1206 3rd Street, San Rafael CA 94901. If you would like to remain completely anonymous, please mail your Questionnaire to the above address so we have no identifying information (e.g., e-mail addresses or fax headers.)

Thank you for your participation in this effort to establish communication and collaboration between the judiciary and the community it serves.

Sincerely,

Center for Judicial Excellence

Please email your completed Questionnaire to info@centerforjudicialexcellence.org or fax it to 415-256-9606. Thanks for taking the time to share your views.



Public Questionnaire Regarding the Court System

****Please use additional paper if needed, and submit only one Questionnaire per person.***

1. You are a: court employee, attorney, former litigant, court expert, current litigant, concerned citizen, other _____.

2. Do you believe that there are critical and pressing problems within the judiciary and court administration?

- There are many problems
- There are some problems
- There are a few problems
- There are no problems
- Not certain

If you believe there are problems with the judiciary and court administration system, what do you believe those problems are? (Please be as specific as you can.)

3. What factors do you believe have created these problems?

4. Have you personally experienced a problem with the judiciary or court administration?

- Yes, experienced a problem(s)
- No, have not

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If you experienced a problem: Using the list below, please identify the problems you have encountered with the court system.

Be sure to check all that apply. (For these purposes, “judge” can refer to any court commissioner.)

- Judicial bias (race/ethnicity, gender, disability, economic status, sexual orientation, age, other)
- Judicial bias (ruled in favor of friends or political/personal/professional colleagues)
- Judge prejudged the case
- Judge didn't know the facts
- Judge didn't know/apply the law
- Judge hadn't read the file or was otherwise unprepared
- Favoritism
- Judge excluded or ignored important evidence
- Judge struck important pleadings from the record
- Contact between judges or commissioners with one party or attorney in a dispute, without notice to or inclusion of the other side
- Threats by judge or administration
- Intimidation by judge or administration
- Retaliation by judge or administration
- Lack of knowledge of tentative ruling system
- Administration was rude to court employees
- Administration favors certain court employees
- Understaffing
- Administration doesn't listen to concerns of court employees
- Unable to get calls returned from court/administrative personnel
- Inquiries to court officials or administration ignored
- Forced or bullied into settlement at bench bar conference/arbitrations/mediations without having sufficient information about your case
- Family Court mediators did not read your file
- Couldn't get a custody evaluation through the court
- Conflicts of interest between judges and persons, entities or interests involved in a case
- Delay
- Judge insensitive to domestic violence or sexual abuse issues
- Inappropriate judicial demeanor (inconsiderate, rude, demeaning, threatening, disrespectful)
- Refusal of a judge or commissioner to recuse himself or herself for cause when appropriate
- Missing, destroyed or misplaced files
- Inability to obtain a file
- Inability to obtain a fee award from a judge so you could hire a lawyer
- Lack of access to information about the court process
- Lack of adequate special services such as language interpretation and accommodation for disabilities
- Lack of timely access to legal representation
- Improper reliance by judges or commissioners on third parties such as court mediators, attorneys or guardians for children or the elderly, other county entities or employees
- Lack of communication from the court
- Lack of notice of proceedings
- The court accepted the Family Court Services recommendation without allowing you to cross-examine them
- You didn't have enough time with the Family Court Services mediator
- Family Court Services mediators did not have sufficient training for the specific demands of your case (domestic violence, sexual abuse, etc.)
- Other _____

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Please list the year and judge's name for each of the problems you checked on page 3:

5. Did you take any action to deal with this problem?

- Yes, did something
 No, did not

If you took action: Please describe what action you took, or what you did to deal with this problem.

6. Were the problems resolved?

- Yes, resolved
 No, not resolved

If so, how? If not, why not? What barriers did you face?

7. What specific things do you believe need to be done to remedy problems with the Marin County Judiciary and court administration system?

8. How would you rate the level of credibility that your local court and court administration system has with the public?

** Please use a scale from one to ten where one means very little credibility and ten means very high credibility.*

CREDIBILITY LEVEL _____

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9. **The Center for Judicial Excellence** is interested in the establishment of a Judicial Performance Evaluation (JPE) System through which judges' performance would be monitored based on their adherence to the Canons of Judicial Ethics (more information about JPEs and the Judicial Canons can be found on CJE's website). Do you think this could be helpful in preventing future problems?

How helpful do you believe this would be in preventing future problems?

- Very helpful
- Somewhat helpful
- Not helpful at all
- Can't say

10. How important is it to you that the perceived problems with the courts and court administration system be addressed and resolved?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not very important
- Not important at all
- Can't say

11. Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

We intend to tabulate, summarize and disseminate the results of this Questionnaire on our website and perhaps more broadly. While reported results will be fairly general: e.g. "55 respondents reported missing files," etc., we may also utilize quotes from your Questionnaire. We do not intend to use specific identifying information or names of Questionnaire respondents, unless you specifically provide that information and give us permission to do so.

Are you willing to reveal your identity to the public and/or the press? Yes No

If so, please provide us with the following:

Name & Title (Optional) _____

Contact Info (Optional) _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete our Questionnaire!

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