



WISCONSIN COURT SYSTEM

JUDICIAL EDUCATION

Under the rules of the Wisconsin Supreme Court, Wisconsin trial judges are required to meet compulsory continuing education requirements. Judges of the circuit courts must earn 60 credits of approved judicial education during each six-year period they are on the bench. Supreme court commissioners, staff attorneys for the Court of Appeals, reserve judges, 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, webinars, 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, circuit court commissioners, WI law school representatives, and appellate judges, organizes statewide educational activities throughout the year. These include:

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 circuit court 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 over 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, Treatment Court Seminar, Evidence Workshop, Family Law Seminar, Child Welfare Law Orientation (with heavy coordination by the Children's Court Improvement Program), and the Civil Law and Criminal Law & Sentencing Programs. One prison tour for judges and court staff is also held each year. Additionally, in 2022 the Juvenile Justice (JV) Law Seminar was added back into the yearly roster of events.

Additionally every two years, the Office of Judicial Education hosts a 3-day Faculty Development Workshop to grow their Wisconsin judicial faculty numbers.



Special Programs:

One-time in-person education programs are also scheduled each year (or bi-yearly), including the Digital Evidence Bootcamp and Traffic Law Seminar. Additionally, supplementary webinars are also offered, such as the 2020 Tribal Court Webinar Series, 2021 Effectively Addressing Elder Abuse Across Case Types Two-Part series, 2021 Navigating NGLI & Competency, and a Judicial Ethics and Social Media webinar repeat session in March 2022. *Additional webinars are co-sponsored with the Office of Court Operations and District Administrators to districts, as needed.*

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 addition to the orientation institute, seminars on traffic, trial, special topics and Law & Humanities are held each year (or bi-yearly). A municipal court clerks orientation and seminar is also sponsored each year.

Additionally, starting in 2020, the Office of Judicial Education started to offer a number of supplementary webinars, including Truancy During COVID (a two-part series), Procedural Justice, 4th Amendment Update, and Winter Driving Citations, for municipal court judges and clerks. They will continue this practice into the future.

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 trial 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 the 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**
- **Volume V - Probate and Mental Health**



In 2021, the jury instructions production responsibilities were moved to the Wisconsin State Law Library. Additionally, the role of Committee reporter transferred to the Office of Judicial Education. The three standing Committees, with the assistance of the reporter and under the authority of the Wisconsin Judicial Conference, will continue to produce the instructions for the public. Additionally, this transition prompted the digitization of the collection to enhance access for all.

Three collections of suggested uniform jury instructions are available, including:

- **Wisconsin Jury Instructions - Civil**
- **Wisconsin Jury Instructions - Criminal**
- **Wisconsin Jury Instructions - Children**



Other publications submitted to circuit court judicial officials and stakeholders include, *Perlman's Pearls & Case Classic* publications, Quarterly Legal Shorts & Muni Morsel videos, and monthly newsletters (video and paper-based). In 2021, the Office of Judicial Education also developed an online Judicial Training Clearinghouse to post outside training opportunities, a trainer database, judicial credits page, and faculty resources. This clearinghouse is in addition to the Online Resources Page.

The Office of Judicial Education also revises and updates a number of other municipal 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 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.

Final Numbers 1, 2, 3

The Office of Judicial Education helps facilitate trainings, materials, and credits for over:

- 252 Circuit Court Judges
- 130 Circuit Court Commissioners
- 84 Reserve Judges
- 32 Staff Attorneys for the Court of Appeals
- 7 Supreme Court Commissioners

In addition to those individuals participating for credit, the Office of Judicial Education opens many of their trainings to appellate judges, supreme court justices, law clerks, judicial assistants, director of state courts staff, and Wisconsin tribal judges wanting to participate. Traditionally, numbers can range from 25 - 300 for attendees at any specific event. The Office of Judicial Education will continue to provide high-quality, peer-led judicial education to the Wisconsin Court System.