



Alberta Court of Justice

New Justices Education Plan

The Alberta Court of Justice embraces a culture of excellence and is committed to ensuring that new Justices feel welcome, integrate into the Court, and become proficient in their role as early as possible in their careers. To support this transition, the Court has established the *New Justices Education Plan* to help new Justices adapt to the bench.

Every Justice has a responsibility to address their professional development needs throughout their career. The Assistant Chief Justice for each area will ensure that new Justices receive the initial guidance, information, and training that they require, in accordance with the elements of this plan and tailored to their individual background and needs.

The Court of Justice continuously monitors legal and societal developments and will regularly review and refine this plan to ensure that education requirements for new Justices remain relevant and effective.

1.0 Plan Overview

1.1 This plan includes the following components:

- Shadowing Program
- Mentoring Program
- New Justices Programs
- Education Plans – First Five Years on the Bench
- Professional Development Allowance and Education Leave
- Educational Materials for New Justices
- Internal Court resources sessions
- Ongoing Relationship with the Judicial Education Manager

2.0 Shadowing Program

2.1 Upon appointment, new Justices are scheduled to observe senior, more experienced Justices in various proceedings. This process helps new Justices become familiar with the Court's practices and fosters stronger relationships with other Justices. The

Assistant Chief Justice, in collaboration with the new Justice's mentor, will consider the new Justice's background and experience when determining shadowing schedules and the length of participation. Schedules should allow one or two days per week for reading and preparation.

2.2 New Justices will shadow Justices from all divisions and, where available, attend the following proceedings:

- Docket Courts;
- Trial Courts;
- Pre-Trial Hearings;
- Confirmation Hearings;
- Pre-Preliminary Hearing Meetings;
- Judicial Dispute Resolution Hearings;
- Bail Hearings;
- Fatality Inquiries;
- Drug Treatment Court;
- Mental Health Court;
- Indigenous Court;
- Mediation;
- Pre-Trial Conferences;
- Chambers List;
- Assessments;
- Employment Standards Hearings;
- Hearing Office procedures; and
- Other Chambers applications, such as applications for warrants or emergency telephone apprehension calls under child protection legislation.

3.0 **Mentoring Program**

3.1 The Office of the Chief Justice supports a mentoring program for new Justices. Access to a mentor helps facilitate the transition to the Bench, builds confidence, fosters positive relationships within the Judiciary, and provides individualized educational and social support.

3.2 ***Objectives of the Mentoring Program***

3.2.1 The mentoring program aims to:

- Clarify and convey a vision of the craft of judging;
- Provide encouragement and constructive feedback;
- Assist Justices in achieving high standards;
- Support the sharing of knowledge and experience;
- Facilitate integration into the Judiciary;
- Identify learning needs and develop a tailored learning plan accordingly;
- Involve experienced Justices in the development of their profession; and
- Create a network of Justices.

3.3 ***Role and Responsibilities of the Assistant Chief Justices***

3.3.1 Facilitating mentoring relationships between new Justices and a willing senior Justice. Mentors are selected by their willingness and availability, experience and knowledge, and strong listening and constructive feedback skills,

3.3.2 Considering expressed needs and preferences of both the mentor and the new Justice, the skills to be developed by the new Justice, the mentor's corresponding expertise, and personal characteristics when suggesting pairings.

3.3.3 Explaining the mentoring process to the new Justice, including the benefits of the program and expectations of participation.

3.3.4 Recognizing the time commitment required for mentors to fulfill the responsibilities of the mentorship relationship.

3.3.5 Ensuring, in conjunction with the mentor, that new Justices receive information on the following topics as soon as possible after appointment:

- Judicial conduct and ethics both inside and outside of the courtroom;
- Courtroom demeanor;
- Administrative procedures, including an orientation to the work of the clerks; and
- Where relevant, procedures and law related to issuing out-of-court orders, including Digital Judicial Authorizations (DJA), warrants, production orders and other documents.

3.4 ***Role and Responsibilities of the Mentors***

- 3.4.1 Participate in determining the suitability of the mentoring match and commit fully to the objectives of the program. Work closely with the Assistant Chief Justice to ensure that the goals and objectives of the mentoring program are achieved.
- 3.4.2 At the outset, provide leadership in the relationship, gradually sharing responsibility with the new Justice as confidence grows. Introduce the new Justice to key Court personnel, offer encouragement and constructive challenges, and assist in identifying learning needs for the development of an individualized education plan.
- 3.4.3 Provide constructive feedback, share knowledge and experience, and maintain strict confidentiality regarding all mentoring conversations.

3.5 ***Roles and Responsibilities of the New Justice***

- 3.5.1 Assume responsibility for their own learning and development throughout the mentoring process. While they may suggest potential mentors to the Assistant Chief Justice, the final selection rests with the Assistant Chief Justice. They are expected to actively share responsibility for maintaining a productive mentoring relationship.
 - 3.5.2 Clearly identify what they want to learn, understand, and accomplish. Requesting feedback, acting on it constructively, and striving for continuous improvement are essential. Developing and regularly updating an individualized learning education plan ensures progress and alignment with professional goals.
 - 3.5.3 Must maintain strict confidentiality regarding all mentoring conversations, fostering trust and integrity within the mentoring relationship.
- 3.6 Mentors and new Justices should participate in an orientation session to define mutual expectations. They can use the [Checklist for Mentors and New Justices](#) as a guideline. It is advisable to schedule meetings for the next few months during this session. The number of meetings is at the discretion of the pair; however, they should aim to meet at least once a week during the first month, once every two weeks for the next five months, and about once a month thereafter.
- 3.7 The mentoring program is expected to last up to 12 months. During this period, mentors and new Justices should gather feedback and suggestions on how to improve the program.

- 3.8 If desired, new Justices may invite their mentor or the Assistant Chief Justice to observe them and provide feedback during their initial experiences on the bench. Other members of the Court or judicial clerks may also serve as valuable sources of feedback.
- 3.9 The Judicial Education Manager will provide mentors and new Justices with the following materials to facilitate their role:
- [Checklist for Mentors and New Justices](#)
 - [Mentoring in the Judiciary, a Guide for Judges \(Ontario Court of Justice\)](#)
- 3.10 **Program Feedback**
- 3.10.1 To support the continuation and success of this plan, and to maintain a record of participation, the Assistant Chief Justices will provide feedback to the Chair of the Court's OCJ Education Committee six months after the commencement of a mentorship. This feedback will address the effectiveness of the mentorship and shadowing activities and include any suggestions from participants for improving the program.

4.0 **New Justices Education Programs**

4.1 **National Programs**

4.1.1 New Justices attend the following external programs:

- CAPCJ *New Judges' Education Program* (Bromont, QC)
- NJI *Newly Appointed Provincial and Territorial Skills Seminar* (Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON)

4.2 **In-House Programs**

4.2.1 New Justices attend the following annual in-house programs:

- A one-day virtual *Judging in Your First Three Years (JYFTY)* program, held on the Friday of the second full week of January;
- Two half-day *Boot Camp for New(er) Justices and Justices of the Peace* programs organized in conjunction with the APJA/SJPA Educational Conferences; and
- A two-day *Judgment Writing Program*, offered twice yearly.

4.2.2 These in-house programs are presented by members of the Court or guest instructors. They provide practical tips and ideas on important topics, focus on

the Alberta context, and serve as a forum for questions and discussion within the Court.

- 4.2.3 The programs address four key areas of education: substantive law, judicial skills, social context, and judicial development. Particular emphasis is placed on sexual offences law, Indigenous justice, case management, recent and ongoing legal or procedural developments, and programs designed to enhance understanding of cultural dimensions in judging.

5.0 Education Plans – First Five Years on the Bench

- 5.1 New Justices are expected to create an [individualized education plan](#) for their first five years on the bench.
- 5.2 With assistance from the Judicial Education Manager, new Justices will evaluate the previous years' educational accomplishments, revise their learning needs, and select appropriate educational materials and courses for the upcoming year.
- 5.3 Each plan should include:
- Attendance at the CAPCJ *New Judges' Education Program*;
 - Attendance at the NJI *Newly Appointed Provincial and Territorial Skills Seminar*;
 - Attendance at an evidence-based seminar (e.g., NJI *Evidence Workshop*, or another evidence-based seminar specifically approved by the Chief Justice);
 - Indigenous culture and/or Indigenous justice learning;
 - Sexual offences law education, if relevant;
 - Attendance at the In-House New Justices Programs offered by the Court;
 - Attendance at the semi-annual APJA/SJPA Educational Conferences; and
 - A selection of courses covering the four main areas of judicial education: substantive law, judicial skills, social context, and judicial development.

6.0 Professional Development Allowance and Education Leave

- 6.1 Full-time Justices are entitled to up to 10 days of education leave per calendar year, plus necessary travel time.
- 6.2 Attendance at New Justices Education Programs are not included in the calculation of the annual 10 days of education leave.

- 6.3 Attendance at an Evidence Seminar within the first five years on the bench (e.g., NJI *Evidence Workshop*, or another evidence-based seminar specifically approved by the Chief Justice) is not included in the calculation of the annual 10 days of education leave.
- 6.4 Justices may use their annual Professional Development Allowance (PDA) to cover the cost of conferences and books, in accordance with the *Provincial Court Judges and Applications Judges Compensation Regulation* (Alta Reg 176/1998) and the guidelines administered through the Office of the Chief Justice.
- 6.5 Further information is available in the Court's Education Plan, and the [Office of the Chief Justice Education Fund Policy](#).

7.0 Educational Materials for New Justices

- 7.1 Access to Judicial Administration materials provided by the Office of the Chief Justice, including:
- Commencement Package for Newly Appointed Justices
 - [Orientation Guide for Newly Appointed Justices](#)
 - [Professional Development Allowance Guidelines](#)
- 7.2 Access to the [Office of the Chief Justice SharePoint](#), which includes:
- Administrative policies and procedures
 - Travel authorization templates and guidelines
 - Education and professional development policies
- 7.3 Access to the [Judicial Education SharePoint](#), which includes:
- 7.3.1 Educational Policies and Plans:
- Court-approved education plans, policies and guidelines for judicial development
 - Orientation materials for new Justices
- 7.3.2 Inventory of Learning Opportunities
- A listing of available courses, seminars, and programs relevant to judicial education
- 7.3.3 Court of Justice Bench Books
- Comprehensive reference materials for judicial decision-making
- 7.3.4 Video and Presentation Library

- Recordings from past Lunch & Learns
- New Justices program sessions and related materials
- Educational presentations and recordings
- Session materials from past APJA/SJPA educational conferences

7.4 Access to the [NJL website](#), which includes:

- New Justices Resource Page
- Archive of NJI program materials
- Subject collections
- Webinars and podcasts
- Bench Books and publications

7.5 Database passwords, textbooks and information distributed by the [Alberta Law Libraries](#), including:

- Access to legal research platforms (e.g., WestLaw, Lexis+ and CanLII)
- Access to the library catalogue
- An annual list of suggested titles

8.0 **Ongoing Relationship with the Judicial Education Manager**

8.1 The Judicial Education Manager serves as the Court's specialist in judicial education and is available to assist Justices in planning educational activities. The Manager also helps identify, locate, and select appropriate educational resources to support professional development.