

New Judges Training Seminar



This seminar is designed for judges in their first five years on the bench, this small-group training provides a practical, interactive learning experience focused on the realities of judicial work. Through facilitated discussions, realistic scenarios, and hands-on exercises, participants will strengthen core judicial skills, exchange ideas with peers, and develop practical strategies they can apply immediately in the courtroom.

From Where to Hang Your Robe to How to Write a Record: Practical Tips for New Judges

Success on the bench often comes from practical experience and proven techniques. This interactive session shares real-world tips, courtroom management strategies, and time-saving practices from experienced judges to help participants increase efficiency, communicate effectively, and confidently address everyday judicial challenges.

Learning Objectives:

- Implement practical techniques to improve courtroom organization and efficiency.
- Develop effective communication strategies for managing attorneys, litigants, jurors, and court staff.
- Apply proven practices for handling common courtroom challenges with confidence and professionalism.

Speakers:



Hon. Rachel Pickering

Judge Rachel Pickering is the first Hispanic judge to serve on the Kansas Court of Appeals. She comes to the Court following service as a district court judge in Kansas' 3rd Judicial District. Prior to joining the bench in 2019, she was assistant solicitor general in the Attorney General's Office and assistant district attorney in Shawnee County. She also spent a decade in criminal defense, both at the appellate and trial levels. Earlier in her career, she specialized in intellectual property. She earned her law degree

from the University of Missouri School of Law in 2003, with a certificate in e-commerce and intellectual property. She is an adjunct professor at Washburn University School of Law and is involved with the ABA's criminal justice and science and technology law sections. She is the current District 10 representative for the National Association of Women Judges.



Hon. Bride Seifert

Bride Seifert is a Superior Court Judge in beautiful Homer, Alaska who covers every case type that comes through the door. Before taking the bench Judge Seifert served as a: prosecutor for the rural communities of Bethel and Kotzebue; as an administrative law judge who helped expand the agency's successful mediation program; as an Assistant Attorney General, and as a law clerk for the Honorable Louis J. Menendez.

Before moving to Alaska, Judge Seifert was the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce's Energy Policy Manager. She also operated a home-cleaning company, worked in ski and flight-seeing industries, managed a homeownership program, and provided logistics and operations support for science programs in Alaska, Antarctica, and Greenland.

Judge Seifert believes that many cases are best resolved through mediation and therapeutic alternatives to the standard adversarial court process. She is a proud member of the NAWJ and is honored to serve as District 13's Director.

Ethics and AI

Generative artificial intelligence is rapidly changing the legal landscape, creating new opportunities and ethical challenges for judges. This session explores what judges need to know about AI, including ethical considerations, the risks of AI-generated filings and evidence, and practical ways AI can be used responsibly in judicial work.

Learning Objectives:

- Explain the capabilities and limitations of generative AI and its implications for judicial decision-making.
- Evaluate ethical issues involving AI use in chambers, AI-generated filings, and AI-created evidence, including deepfakes.
- Identify best practices for recognizing AI-related risks while responsibly leveraging AI tools to enhance judicial efficiency.



Speaker:

Professor April Dawson

April Dawson is a Professor of Law and Faculty Director of the Howard Law AI Initiative at Howard University School of Law. Her teaching, scholarship, and national presentations focus on artificial intelligence, legal ethics, AI governance, and the responsible use of technology in the legal profession and the courts. She is the author of *Artificial Intelligence and Academic Integrity* and co-author, with Dan Linna, of *Artificial Intelligence and Legal Reasoning*. Dawson frequently presents CLE programs on the ethical and practical implications of generative AI for lawyers and judges, including programs for the Practising Law Institute, the Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism, the North Carolina Business Court, and the Delaware Judges Retreat. Her honors include being named a 2026 ABA Legal Rebel and one of the 2026 Top 50 Legal Innovators in Academia.

Thriving in Your Role as a Judge

Transitioning to the bench requires more than legal expertise—it demands leadership, sound judgment, effective courtroom management, and a commitment to public trust. This session provides practical guidance to help judges navigate the challenges of their new role, build confidence, and establish best practices for managing cases, litigants, and courtroom proceedings.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify key responsibilities and expectations of judicial leadership and professionalism.
- Apply practical strategies for effective courtroom management and decision-making.
- Recognize approaches for fostering fairness, impartiality, and public confidence in the judiciary.

Speakers:



Hon. Sandra Avila Ramirez

Judge Sandra Avila Ramirez serves as the presiding judge of the 98th District Court which sits as the juvenile court in Travis County. A native of the Rio Grande Valley, she was the first in her family to graduate high school, later earning her B.A. from St. Edward's University and her J.D. from Texas Tech School of Law. Her legal career spans over 25 years, including as a legal aid attorney, prosecutor, and private defense attorney, where her practice focused on indigent, Spanish-speaking clients. Judge Avila Ramirez has dedicated her life to public service, beginning as a volunteer firefighter and EMS first responder at age 20. She remains deeply committed to serving vulnerable communities and advocating for equity in the juvenile justice system.

In January 2025, Judge Avila Ramirez was sworn in as Judge of the 98th Judicial District Court - a general jurisdiction civil court specializing in juvenile law - in Travis County, Texas. She is the first Latina ever elected to preside over Juvenile Court at the Gardner-Betts Juvenile Center, where over 50% of the children referred to the juvenile justice system are Latinos.



Hon. Karen Sage

Judge Karen Sage is a Past President of the National Association of Women Judges. Before taking the bench, she practiced both civil and criminal law at the state and federal level. She has worked as a commercial litigator, Chief Counsel to the Mayor Los Angeles, judicial clerk to the Hon. Kim McLane Wardlaw, and an Assistant United States Attorney. While in the EDNY, prosecuted co-conspirators of Jordan Belfort the “Wolf of Wall Street.” Upon coming to Texas, she has been Assistant District Attorney. In 2010,

she was elected judge of the 299th District Court. She is mother to Abbie, 27, and Harry, 25. She is a *cum laude* graduate of the University of Minnesota School of Law.

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