

Fostering Belonging in Courthouses

Created in Partnership with the Racial Justice Consortium

In a Physical Space

- Implement a **Greeter** who can welcome participants and direct them to services as necessary
- Redefine what a "Court" is and consider moving to a **location in the community**
- Change the **artwork**, use photos and art that represent the diverse community. Paint with vivid, welcoming colors.
- Include and feature projects from **juvenile justice participants**
- Provide **childcare** for specific times, hearings, or days to fit community needs. Include a child-friendly space.
- Offer food. Make **nutritious snacks** available and/or community food bank resources



This court is respectful of all genders and gender identities.



Please feel free to introduce yourself and your gender pronouns to our staff.

Forms, Signs, and Information

- **Analyze signage critically:** less is more, include multiple languages
- Have **forms translated** into most common languages, and available in printed copies
- Have **signs informing participants of available services**, and have staff inquire if services are needed at the beginning of hearings
- Provide **information hubs** for community resources, court resources, and how to find lawyers
- Create **how-to guides** for with further resource links, and **summaries of what to expect** for certain cases
- When possible, have **service providers** or representatives available in the courthouse



Click here for diverse artwork made available by the Minority and Justice Commission

Technology

- Create **rooms with devices** where participants can access virtual hearings
- Create **maps of WiFi** and hotspot availability
- **Loan out devices** for court hearings
- Take the time in virtual hearings to **ask if participants can hear and see you** and others in the meeting



Staff Development

- Consider creating an **equity team** to assist in making recommendation on hiring practices, long term trainings, and increasing visibility
- Create **values or mission statements** that include inclusiveness and belonging. Train staff on these and incorporate it into your work
- Develop **interview questions** for new staff that prioritize equity, growth, curiosity, and cultural competency
- Plan **regular trainings** on belonging, implicit bias, white privilege, and LGBTQ education for all staff
- Consider creating a **staff book club or reading list** on equity and inclusion topics

Courtroom Proceedings

- **Address participants with respect:** maintain eye contact, use chosen pronouns, ask how to pronounce names (and note those pronunciations for the future), and use inclusive language
- Explain generally how the calendar will be conducted and what to expect
- **Use plain language** when possible and verify participant understanding
- **Use participants' names, not categories**
- Ask participants if they have questions, and answer those questions patiently
- Consider starting proceedings with a land acknowledgment, unique to your location
- **Consider statements of belonging, inclusion, or intention.** These could be verbal, online, or posted in a permanent and aesthetically pleasing way
- When appropriate, consider starting a court calendar with a group breathing or **mindfulness** exercise (such as Drug or Dependency Court)
- Consider creating **summary documents** for form orders and judgements, tailored to the type of case, to summarize the ruling and participant obligations



[Click here for a Native Land Map](#)

