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GENDER AND JUSTICE COMMISSION



About

The Gender and Justice Commission is Chaired by Justice Sheryl Gordon McCloud, Washington State Supreme Court. Judge Marilyn Paja, Kitsap County District Court serves as Vice Chair.

The Commission's 21 members include judicial officers from all court levels and tribal courts, private practice and legal aid attorneys, professors, court staff, representatives from Washington Women Lawyers, disability rights organizations, and advocates for survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

The Commission also counts among its stakeholders liaisons from the Access to Justice Board and local law schools.

History

In 1987 the Washington State Legislature mandated the Office of the Administrator for the Courts initiate measures to prevent gender and bias in the state court system. After two years of research, public hearing and surveys, the Gender and Justice Task Force concluded gender bias does exist in the Washington State court system and described the extent of that bias in its final report Gender and Justice in the Courts, Washington State, 1989.

The Washington State Supreme Court Gender and Justice Commission was established in 1994 and it is one of the last remaining state court entities that is solely dedicated to identifying and addressing gender bias in the courts. The Supreme Court has renewed the Commission every five years since, with the most recent renewal being ordered by the Court in 2015.

Mission

The mission of the Gender and Justice Commission is to identify concerns and make recommendations regarding the equal treatment of all parties, attorneys, and court employees in the State courts, and to promote gender equality through researching, recommending, and supporting the implementation of best practices; providing educational programs that enhance equal treatment of all parties; and serving as a liaison between the courts and other organizations in working toward communities free of bias.



www.courts.wa.gov/genderjustice
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Committees

The Gender and Justice Commission's committees, each chaired by Commission members, focus on these four key areas:

EDUCATION

The Education Committee develops education programs for judicial officers, court staff, and justice system partners on the impact of gender on the administration of and access to justice.

INCARCERATED WOMEN AND GIRLS

The Incarcerated Women and Girls Committee works to address issues facing justice involved women and girls, including court access for incarcerated parents.

GENDER JUSTICE STUDY TASK FORCE

The Gender Justice Study is a multi-year project working to determine the impact of gender bias on access to justice, focusing on the intersection of gender and race, poverty, and other identities. Key areas will be targeted with innovative solutions to work towards eliminating gender bias in the courts.

DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The Domestic and Sexual Violence Committee oversees the Gender and Justice Commission's work on court system response to gender based violence, including updates to judicial resources on these issues.

TRIBAL STATE COURT CONSORTIUM

The Tribal State Court Consortium works in conjunction with the Gender and Justice Commission to build relationships with tribal courts and partner in addressing issues of domestic and sexual violence.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Communications Committee promotes the work of the Gender and Justice Commission through publications and outreach events.



I ENCOURAGE ANYONE WHO IS INTERESTED IN ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE COURT SYSTEM TO REACH OUT TO THE COMMISSION AND BE INVOLVED IN THESE EFFORTS

Justice Sheryl Gordon McCloud
GENDER AND JUSTICE COMMISSION, CHAIR



WORK OF THE COMMISSION

2019 Projects/Key Priorities

- Evaluate the impact of gender bias on access to justice in Washington State and implement new research and pilot projects to address this.
- Conduct outreach to tribal courts to learn about successful protection order enforcement processes and identify gaps. Develop best practice guidance to ensure state and tribal courts and law enforcement comply with full faith & credit.
- Continue working with stakeholders to improve access to the courts for incarcerated parents, a large proportion of which are women, in cases involving their children.
- Develop education for judicial officers and court staff on the court's response to issues of gender bias.
- Prioritize projects that will improve access to justice for women of color and women in poverty.
- Ensure judicial officers have access to timely and updated resources on issues of critical importance, such as domestic violence and sexual harassment.

Key Accomplishments

- Supporting legislation banning shackling during labor for women who give birth while incarcerated.
- Convening stakeholders to address the issue of barriers to court access for incarcerated parents in civil cases.
- Convening multidisciplinary workgroups on domestic violence perpetrator treatment and risk assessment and reporting to the legislature.
- Managing Washington State's Violence Against Women STOP grant allocation for courts, a funding source that supports the Commission's education and resource development to improve the court response to domestic and sexual violence, stalking, and dating violence.

