

GENDER AND JUSTICE COMMISSION

2020-2024 REPORT



WASHINGTON
COURTS
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

GENDER AND JUSTICE COMMISSION

Promoting Gender Equality
in the Justice System





Message from the Co-Chairs

On behalf of the Washington State Supreme Court Gender and Justice Commission, we are proud to present the 2020 – 2024 Report. This report highlights the Commission's key initiatives and accomplishments in the advancement of our mission to promote gender equality in the justice system. While the past five years have presented challenges, they have also created opportunities to continue this work in new and innovative ways. We particularly want to highlight the following achievements:

- **Gender Justice Study** – The publication of *2021: How Gender and Race Affect Justice Now* was a massive effort and the culmination of 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. The recommendations have laid out a roadmap for future Commission work, in conjunction with justice system partners. Work is currently underway to assess progress on those recommendations, with a status report anticipated by the end of 2025.
- **Education Initiatives** – The COVID-19 pandemic gave us an opportunity to change how we provide education. In addition to in-person conference sessions, which we continue to sponsor, technology has allowed us to host short (1-2 hour) webinars on a variety of gender-related topics. This format allows us to reach many people across the state, be responsive to current issues, and to share the recorded content on our website.
- **Legislative Work Groups:** From 2017 through 2024, the legislature directed the Gender and Justice Commission to convene several work groups and submit reports. The work groups submitted reports on a variety of topics, including domestic violence perpetrator treatment, domestic violence risk assessment, civil protection orders, and crime victim services.
- **Resource Development:** The Commission has developed several resources that are available on our website, including the Gender Justice Study and recommendations, bench guides, the Gender-Based Violence Training & Resource Library, and the monthly newsletter (started in 2023).

We are thrilled to share and celebrate the achievements and hard work of the Gender and Justice Commissioners, dedicated staff, and committee members. Thank you for your continued support of the Gender and Justice Commission.



Justice Sheryl Gordon McCloud
Washington State Supreme Court



Judge Rebecca Glasgow
Court of Appeals, Division II

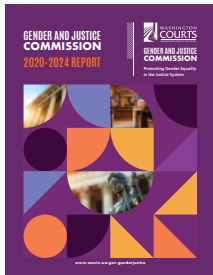
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This report is published by the Gender and Justice Commission, supported by the Washington State Supreme Court, in Olympia, Washington. The focus of this report is to spotlight the Commission's key initiatives and accomplishments from 2020-2024.



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Introduction

Commission Mission

The Washington State Supreme Court Gender and Justice Commission was established by the Washington State Supreme Court in 1994. The Court renewed the Commission every five years thereafter until March 5, 2025, when the Court signed an order recognizing the Gender and Justice Commission as a permanent Commission of the Court.

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.

Commission Members

The Commission is comprised of 23 members who serve an initial three-year term, with the potential to renew. In addition, the Commission maintains liaison relationships with other organizations, working toward the shared goal of gender equality. We value the expertise of ongoing members while we are open to fresh ideas and perspectives as we welcome new members to our working Commission. Through its diverse multidisciplinary membership, the Commission exercises a strong statewide leadership role in promoting gender equity in the legal and judicial community.

CO-CHAIR

Justice Sheryl Gordon McCloud
Washington State Supreme Court

CO-CHAIR

Judge Rebecca Glasgow
Court of Appeals, Division II

Victoria Blumhorst
Spokane Counsel for Defense

Karla Carlisle
Northwest Justice Project – Kennewick

Professor Lynn Daggett
Gonzaga University School of Law

Quinn Dalan
Central WA Legal Aid

Judge Michael Finkle
King County District Court

Judge Janet M. Helson
King County Superior Court

Elizabeth Hendren
Sexual Violence Law Center

Shannon Kilpatrick
Stritmatter Kessler Koehler Moore

Honorable Raylene King
Whatcom County Clerk

LaTricia Kinlow
Tukwila Municipal Court

Irene Motles
Washington Women Lawyers

Judge Sophie Nomee
Colville Tribal Court

Commissioner Javier Ortiz
King County Superior Court

Dr. Dana Raigrodski
University of Washington School of Law

Jennifer Ritchie
King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office

Carlyn Sampson
Rebuilding Hope!

Barbara Serrano
Washington State Department of Social
and Health Services

Judge Jacqueline Shea-Brown
Benton & Franklin Counties Superior Court

Chief Judge Cindy K. Smith
Suquamish Tribal Court

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This is the membership as of May 2025.
[View Current Membership Online →](#)

Thank you to the following Gender and Justice Commissioners who also served during this reporting period: Judge Marilyn Paja (former Commission Co-Chair), Dua Abudiab, Honorable Melissa Beaton, Judge Anita Crawford-Willis, Honorable Josie Delvin, Chief Judge Michelle Demmert, Justice Steven González, Gail Hammer, Kelly Harris, Grace Huang, Judge Eric Lucas, Lillian Hawkins, Judge Maureen McKee, Commissioner Jonathon Lack, Heather McKimmie, Judge Richard Melnick, Erin Moody, Riddhi Mukhopadhyay, Honorable Dave Reynolds, Judge Sonia Rodriguez True, and Victoria Vreeland.

Gender Bias in Washington State Courts

2021: How Gender and Race Affect Justice Now

The seminal work of the Gender and Justice Commission during this report period is its *2021: How Gender and Race Affect Justice Now* study.

To provide some historical context, in 1987, the Washington State Supreme Court established the Gender and Justice Task Force in response to a legislative mandate to initiate measures to prevent gender bias in the state court system. After two years of research, public hearings, and surveys, the Task Force published its report, *Gender & Justice in the Courts*, in 1989. The recommendations and findings led to establishment of the Gender and Justice Commission.

After more than three decades, it was time to reassess and gain a current understanding of gender bias in the courts. The Commission undertook the 2021 Gender Justice Study, 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.

The project was led by Justice Sheryl Gordon McCloud and Dr. Dana Raigrodski, who convened a Task Force of subject matter experts committed to working intensively on the project. Sierra Rotakhina, MPH, served as study project manager and Kelley Amburgey-Richardson, JD, was the Commission's senior staff person. The work was funded by a State Justice Institute (SJI) project grant, with matching funds from the Gender and Justice Commission and Administrative Office of the Courts.

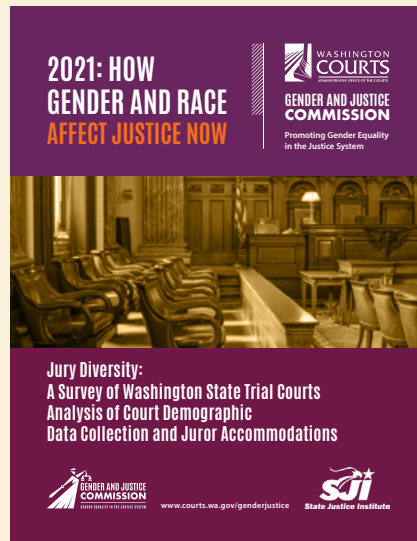
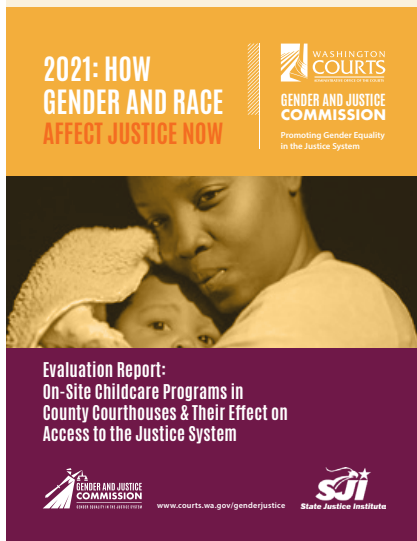
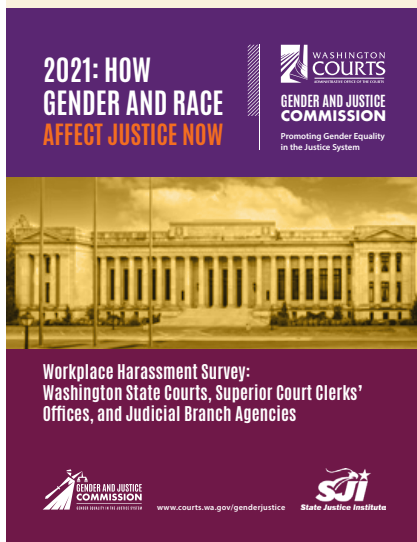
The 2021 Study evaluates the status of the recommendations from the **1989 Study**; presents updated data, research, and literature on 17 topic areas related to the justice system; highlights areas where data and research are lacking; and presents goals and recommendations for addressing inequities identified in the study.

Key findings of the 2021 Gender Justice Study:

- The costs of accessing Washington courts have the greatest impact on single mothers, Black, Indigenous, and women of color, LGBTQ+ people, and those with disabilities.
- Despite improvements in the law and its enforcement, barriers to justice remain for victims of gender-based violence.
- The large number of missing and murdered Indigenous women remains a key concern.
- Judicial branch employees who identified as American Indian, Alaska Native, First Nations, or other Indigenous Group Members, bisexual, gay, or lesbian, and women reported the highest rates of harassment.



The Executive Summary and Recommendations and the Full Report can be viewed on the **Gender and Justice Commission's website**.



Pilot Projects

In addition to the research, the Commission conducted **five pilot projects** to fill research and data gaps identified in the course of conducting the 2021 Study:

- **Workplace Harassment Survey: Washington State Courts, Superior Court Clerks' Offices, and Judicial Branch Agencies**
- **Evaluation of Washington State Domestic Violence – Moral Reconciliation Therapy (DV-MRT) Programs Process and Outcomes**
- **Incarceration of Women in Washington State: Multi-Year Analysis of Felony Data**
- **Evaluation Report: On-Site Childcare Programs in County Courthouses & Their Effect on Access to the Justice System**
- **Jury Diversity: A Survey of Washington State Trial Courts**



Gender Justice Study Implementation

Following the release of the 2021 Gender Justice Study, the Commission established the Implementation Committee to track the recommendations identified in the study and to discuss how justice system partners, study authors and contributors, and standing Commission committees could work together to achieve study goals.

The GJC Implementation Committee met regularly to discuss the 2021 study recommendations and the roles partner entities may play in supporting ongoing efforts. A subgroup of the Implementation Committee also met to discuss data collection challenges and opportunities.

Members of the GJC Study Implementation Committee, along with Commission and Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR) staff, met with the state Office of Equity and the Environmental Justice Council to discuss data collection, coding, and consistency gaps, as well as future opportunities for collaboration. The Committee also met with Department of Corrections (DOC) leadership regarding collaboration on the intersection of the study and the DOC Gender Informed-Practices Assessment reports.

In 2024 and early 2025, Gender and Justice Commissioners conducted outreach to partner entities to assess the status of recommendations that may overlap with their work, compiling status reports. Work is currently underway in 2025 to review the status reports and other information to assess progress on each of the study recommendations, with a progress report anticipated by the end of 2025.

Addressing Harassment and Bias in the Judicial Branch

The Workplace Harassment Survey was one of the five pilot projects conducted as part of the 2021 Gender Justice Study. The survey was conducted in partnership with the Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR). With the support of the Superior Court Judges Association (SCJA) and District and Municipal Court Judges Association (DMCJA) Presidents, WSCCR asked court leaders to distribute the survey to all their employees. The survey was also distributed to other judicial branch agencies including the Commission on Judicial Conduct, the Washington State Association of County Clerks, the Administrative Office of the Courts, and the Office of Civil Legal Aid. The project represented the first time that such information was collected at the state level.

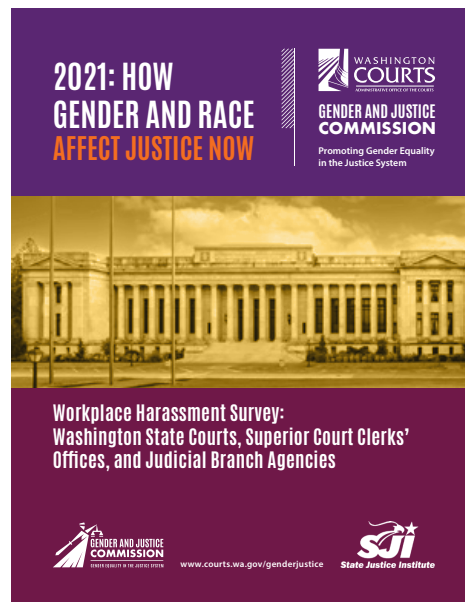
Findings of the survey were presented by the Commission's Education Committee at the spring conferences of the Superior Court Judges' Association (SCJA) Annual Spring Conference and District and Municipal Court Judges' Association (DMCJA).

The survey report can be found on the [Commission's website](#).

The Gender Justice Study highlighted the prevalence of workplace harassment in the judicial branch, particularly affecting women of color, LGBTQ individuals, and court clerks.

The Gender and Justice Commission then worked with the Board for Judicial Administration's (BJA) Policy and Action Commission to develop a strategic initiative proposal. The BJA established the Workplace Antiharassment Task Force to review and assess the anti-bias/anti-harassment training implementation resources compiled by the Gender and Justice Commission; assess other approaches; formulate and launch a pilot program and evaluation model; develop and launch a long-term judicial branch training plan; provide continuous oversight and program improvement; and provide ongoing reports to the BJA on Task Force efforts.

The task force will be co-chaired by the BJA and the Gender and Justice Commission.



Events

TRAININGS



Judicial College Sessions

Judicial College is a required multi-week training that judicial officers attend within one year of their election or appointment. Each year, the Gender and Justice Commission sponsors a session that focuses on domestic violence, civil protection orders, and other related topics. Different judicial faculty lend their skills and experience to this presentation each year:

2020

Judge Anne Hirsch (Thurston County Family & Juvenile Court) and Judge Patti Connolly Walker (Spokane County District Court) presented a session that included an interactive component called 'Comings and Goings.' This exercise, developed by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, allows judges to role-play and experience how trauma can affect decision-making.

2021

Judge Patti Connolly Walker (Spokane County District Court) and Commissioner Indu Thomas (Thurston County Superior Court) presented this session. It was virtual, and focused on domestic violence dynamics, the impact of trauma, and protection order statutes and procedures.

2022

Judge Jacqueline Shea-Brown (Benton and Franklin Counties Superior Court) and Judge Patti Connolly Walker (Spokane County District Court) presented this virtual session. In addition to learning from faculty about protection order laws, session participants engaged in discussion of protection order scenarios in anticipation of real-life application on the bench.

2023

Back in person, Judge Jacqueline Shea-Brown (Benton and Franklin Counties Superior Court) and Commissioner Terri Farmer (Pierce County Superior Court) presented the session in 2023. It focused on identifying and understanding gender-based violence impact and dynamics, recognizing the impact of trauma, and application of trauma-informed practices.

2024

Judge Jacqueline Shea-Brown (Benton and Franklin Counties Superior Court) and Commissioner Terri Farmer (Pierce County Superior Court) also presented in 2024. The session, entitled *Gender-Based Violence: Applying Context to Court Proceedings*, focused on civil protection orders. It built on a pre-work module on identifying and understanding the impact and dynamics of gender-based violence, recognizing the impact of trauma, and employing trauma-informed practices. The session itself was scenario- and discussion-based.

CONFERENCES



Annual Conference Sessions

Each year, the Annual Judicial Conference is held in the fall. This conference is for all levels of courts. The Commission sponsored several sessions at the Annual Judicial Conferences. Presentation topics included:

- *Law, Justice, and the Holocaust: How the Courts Failed Germany (2021)*
- *Sex Harassment at the Courthouse: How to be Part of the Solution (2021)*
- *Gender Justice Study (2021)*
- *Civil Protection Orders: Answering Your Questions (2022)*
- *Holistic Approaches: Focus on Trauma Responsive Judging (2022)*
- *Coercive Control, Mental Health, and Substance Use Coercion in Intimate Partner Violence Cases (2023)*

In 2023, Justice Sheryl Gordon McCloud, attorney Marla Zink, and Commission member Elizabeth Hendren presented on the increasing number of incarcerated women in Washington and the unique challenges this presents, particularly regarding family law and dependency actions.

In 2024, the Commission sponsored two education sessions. *The Resurgence of State Constitutional Rights* was presented by Professors Emeritus Hugh Spitzer (University of Washington) and Robert Williams (Rutgers). *Crafting Visitation Orders to Foster Resilience and Mitigate Trauma for Children of Incarcerated Parents* was presented by Dr. Marian Harris, Isabel Coronado, and Elizabeth Hendren.



Isabel Coronado, Dr. Marian Harris, and Elizabeth Hendren present at Fall Judicial Conference 2024.



GJC Co-Chair Judge Rebecca Glasgow introduces Professor Robert Williams and Professor Hugh Spitzer at Fall Judicial Conference 2024.



Superior Court Judge's Association (SCJA) Conference

At this annual conference held each spring, the Commission sponsored the following sessions from 2020-2024:

- *Workplace Harassment: New Washington Research and Recommendations for Change* (2022)
- *Implementing The Tiffany Hill Act – Electronic Monitoring with Victim Notification Technology* (2023)
- *Evaluating the Evaluations* (2023)
- *Identifying Risks to Children in Domestic Violence Cases* (2024)
- *Burnout and Impacts on Litigants* (2024)

District and Municipal Court Judges' Association (DMCJA) Spring Conference

At this annual conference held each spring, the Commission sponsored the following sessions from 2020-2024:

- In 2020, faculty Judge Jeff Jahns and Judge Jeff Goodwin were joined by Gender and Justice Commission Co-Chair Judge Marilyn Paja as facilitator of *Implementing Weapons Surrender Laws in Your Jurisdiction*. In addition to discussing legislative changes and recent court cases, the session touched on the impact of the pandemic on domestic violence in Washington State.
- In 2021, the Commission sponsored a webinar entitled *What's New With DV Intervention Treatment?*
- In 2022, the Commission sponsored a session on the key findings of the Statewide Workplace Harassment in the Courts Study.
- In 2023, the Commission sponsored a presentation on the Tiffany Hill Act.
- In 2024, the Commission sponsored the Conference's keynote address, *Judicial Burnout and the Impacts on Litigants*, presented by Dr. Kristen Allott.

Domestic Violence Symposium

In October 2021, the Domestic Violence Symposium, a collaborative and multidisciplinary conference, was held virtually. The Commission sponsored two sessions: *Innovation in Domestic Violence Intervention* and *How Gender and Race Affect Justice Now: New Research from the Gender and Justice Commission*.

Civil Protection Order Forums for Judicial Officers

The Commission began hosting regular Civil Protection Order Forums for judicial officers in December 2022, as an opportunity for judicial officers to connect regularly to share information, ask questions, and to brainstorm regarding implementation of Chapter 7.105 RCW. The forums are facilitated by Domestic and Sexual Violence (DSV) Committee Co-Chair, Commissioner Terri Farmer (Pierce County Superior Court).

WEBINAR

The Address Confidentiality Program (ACP): Practical Information for Judicial Officers

In February 2023, the Commission sponsored this webinar presented by Address Confidentiality Program staff from the Secretary of State's Office and Ret. Judge Anne Hirsch. A recording is available on the [Commission's website](#).

WEBINAR

A Multidisciplinary Response to Sex Trafficking in Indigenous Communities

In November 2023, the Tribal State Court Consortium (TSCC) held a webinar entitled *A Multidisciplinary Response to Sex Trafficking in Indigenous Communities*. The webinar was offered to Washington State tribal court judges, state court judges, court system employees, youth justice programs, domestic violence and sexual assault advocates, health advocates, and law enforcement officers.

Dr. Dana Raigrodski, Gender Justice Study Co-Chair and co-author of Chapter 10 (*Commercial Sex and Exploitation*), briefly introduced some of the chapter's key findings, including the targeting of girls and women of color and Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit individuals; the social and historical environments that perpetuate vulnerabilities that feed such targeting; and challenges with justice system and court responses.

Webinar participants then heard from Kelly Stoner, Victim Advocacy Legal Specialist, and Bonnie Clairmont, Victim Advocacy Specialist, both of the Tribal Law and Policy Institute, who offered data, insights, and further resources highlighting risk factors, impacts of trauma, culturally appropriate services, and jurisdictional challenges, and emphasized the need to use a multidisciplinary approach that may be more culturally aligned for Indigenous communities.

A recording of the webinar is available to view on the [TSCC website](#), along with a link to the recommended materials.

VAWA and Washington State Tribes

In November 2024, The TSCC hosted a webinar that included a presentation on the VAWA 2022 Reauthorization and Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction by Kelly Stoner, Victim Advocacy Legal Specialist, and Chia Halpern Beetso, Tribal Courts Specialist, of the Tribal Law and Policy Institute. Participants also heard from judicial panelists, Chief Judge Cindy K. Smith (Suquamish Tribal Court) and Chief Judge John Macarro (Chehalis Tribal Court) regarding implementation.





WOMEN_{OF} POWER SUMMIT 2024

In April 2024, the Gender and Justice Commission partnered with the Women's Justice Institute, Freedom Education Project Puget Sound, and Washington State Department of Corrections for a Women of Power Summit.



With an emphasis on practical connections and support, the Summit was a full-day event to map women's pathways to incarceration and needs during and after incarceration.

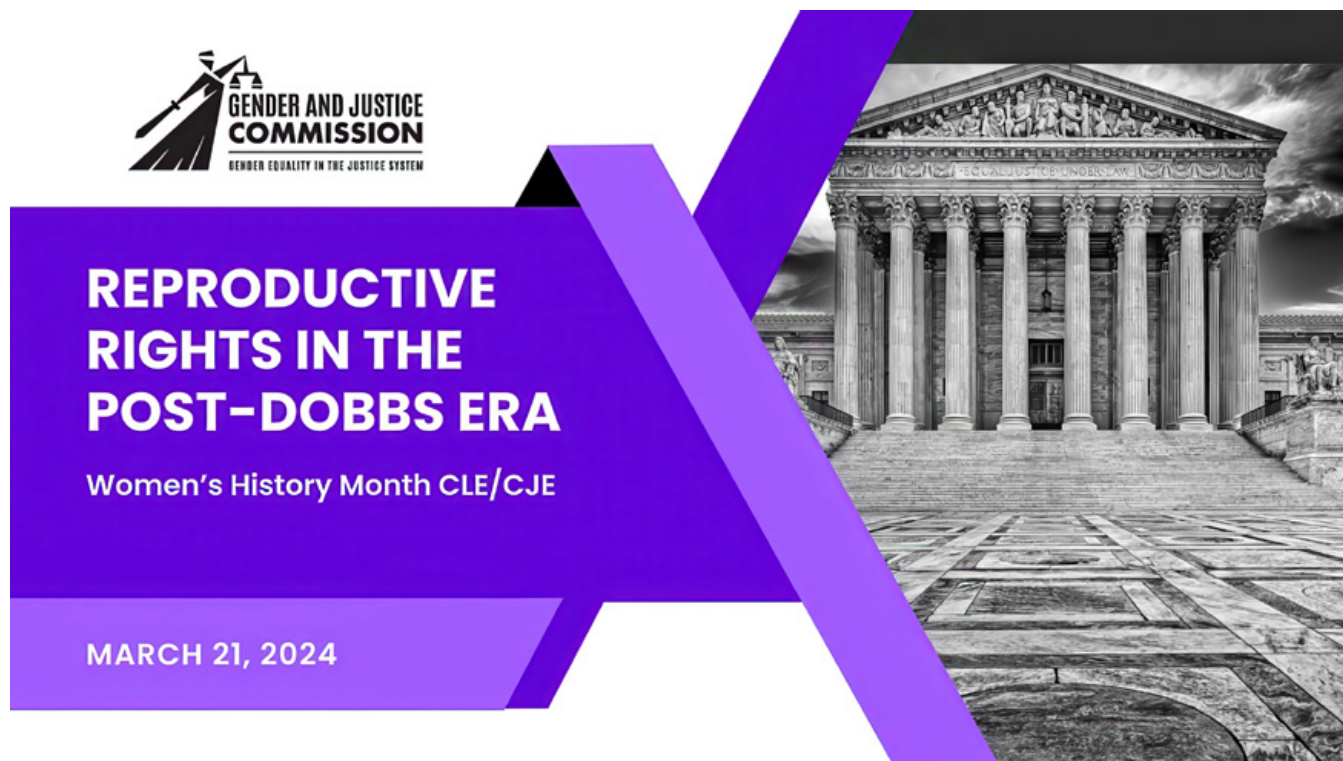
Attendees included formerly incarcerated women, advocates, attorneys, Department of Corrections and Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration staff, social workers, students, academics, and service providers.

A portion of the mapping was dedicated specifically to court processes and access to justice, a priority issue for the Incarceration, Gender & Justice Committee, and topics covered by the 2021 Study. Justice Sheryl Gordon McCloud and Commission member Elizabeth Hendren were scheduled speakers for the event. Incarceration, Gender & Justice Committee members Dr. Marian Harris and Alyssa Knight provided their expertise to the mapping session. Kimberly Mays, who has spoken on court access issues for incarcerated parents as part of Commission judicial training events, also participated in the event.



Women's History Month CLE Events

The Gender and Justice Commission's annual Women's History Month CLE Program in 2023 was a collaboration between the Commission and the Washington State Law Library. Deputy State Law Librarian and Commission Embedded Librarian Laura Edmonston presented *The History of Women in the Washington Courts: Bench and Beyond*. The virtual event covered landmark moments for women in the Supreme Court, the history of jury service for women in Washington, and famous state Supreme Court decisions impacting Washington women. The program concluded with a call to action presented by Commission member Barb Serrano, which featured data from the Commission's Gender Justice Study.



Dobbs CLE Title Slide

In 2024, the Commission hosted a CLE/CJE on reproductive rights in the post-*Dobbs* era. The virtual event's keynote speaker was Professor Carol Sanger from Columbia Law School, an award-winning teacher and influential scholar of reproductive rights, who has been featured on CBS Sunday Morning, NPR, and in the *New York Times*. Professor Sanger presented on the legal history of reproductive rights, jurisprudence, and the US legal landscape post-*Dobbs*.

The second half of the CLE featured a panel discussion moderated by Commission Co-Chair Judge Rebecca Glasgow. The panel started with Judge Glasgow interviewing Senator Drew Hansen about Washington State's "Shield Law," ([HB 1469](#)) which he co-sponsored. The panel concluded with a discussion by Professor Jeffrey Feldman (University of Washington) and Rachael Rogers (Clark County deputy prosecuting attorney) of reproductive rights in Washington that covered extradition, the Full Faith and Credit Clause, and constitutional issues.



Members of the Gender and Justice Commission, along with then Chief Justice Steven González, met with the Colombian “Women, Peace, and Security” leadership program delegation. It was a very special way to celebrate Women’s History Month and to honor these efforts near and far.

International Delegation Visits

In 2023, Gender and Justice Commission (GJC) members, Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) staff, and Chief Justice Steven González met with a group of young leaders from Colombia participating in the U.S. State Department’s “Women, Peace, and Security” delegation, which explored state and local initiatives for women’s empowerment, efforts to support gender equity, and resources for victims of gender-based violence.

In 2024, GJC members partnered with the State Department’s International Visitor Leadership Program to host a dozen judicial officers and other justice leaders from Africa. The group was in Seattle and planned additional events during their stay in Washington and travel within the U.S. Recognizing rule of law issues in courts worldwide, Justice Sheryl Gordon McCloud honored the life of Magistrate Monica Kivuti of Kenya.

Justice Sheryl Gordon McCloud, Judge Rebecca Glasgow, Judge Marilyn Paja (Ret.), and Crissy Anderson represented the Commission at the event and provided information about the history of the Gender and Justice Commission and current work. Dr. Arina Gertseva from the Washington State Center for Court Research gave an impressive presentation about the Kitsap County Girls Court Pilot Program.



During a comment period, representatives from the African Union, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal were given an opportunity to ask questions and make comments. Several focused on preventative work in their countries, designed to keep young girls and women out of the courts by partnering with schools.

Committee & Project Highlights

The Gender and Justice Commission welcomes partners in our work to promote gender equity in the justice system. In the following section of our report, you will read more about our current committees and projects. Please contact Commissions@courts.wa.gov for more information about how to get involved.

Model Anti-Harassment Policy

The Commission rolled out a Model Anti-Harassment Policy for Washington Courts in 2020. The Commission was charged with developing the policy by the Board for Judicial Administration. The policy and supporting documentation, including a list of frequently asked questions, can be found on the [Commission website](#).

Court Education

The Education Committee develops and sponsors education programs for judicial officers, court staff, and justice system partners. All committee programs are focused on gender issues, whether they are known or emerging. When possible, the Commission partners with other entities, such as the Minority and Justice Commission or the Interpreter and Language Access Commission, to put on programs that look at the intersection of gender and other identities.

Between 2020 and 2024, the Education Committee sponsored or co-sponsored over 25 educational opportunities. This includes CLEs, conference programs, and webinars. A full list and description of educational programs can be found on the [Education Committee's website](#).

Domestic and Sexual Violence

The Domestic and Sexual Violence (DSV) Committee oversees the Gender and Justice Commission's work on the court system's response to gender-based violence. In November 2023, the DSV Committee launched the Gender-Based Violence Training & Resource Library, a new resource available on the [Washington Courts' website](#). It is geared primarily toward judicial officers and court personnel in Washington State but may be useful to anyone wishing to learn more about these topics. The Gender-Based Violence Training & Resource Library is organized alphabetically by topic, and the resources compiled in the library are from Washington and national organizations and include bench guides, webinars, bench cards, reports, and more.

In December 2023, the committee reviewed and published updates to several chapters of the **Sexual Violence Bench Guide** consistent with legislative rules and changes, as well as current research and best practices. All Commission bench guides are available to view on the [Commission's website](#).

In January 2024, committee members assisted with review of the **Chapter 7.105 RCW** training modules on gender-based violence and coercive control developed by the Administrative Office of the Courts' Education Services team. The gender-based violence module was part of the required pre-work for the Commission-sponsored session on gender-based violence and protection orders at the Judicial College.



Family Law

The Commission formed the Family Law Committee in 2024. Guided by the goals as defined in the 2021 Gender Justice Study, the Family Law Committee works to eliminate gender-based bias and disparities within the family law system. Guided by the goals as defined in the *2021: How Gender and Race Affect Justice Now* report, pilot studies, and reports produced by and for the Commission, this committee makes recommendations for systemic change, identifies research and funding gaps, makes recommendations regarding evidence-based curricula for judicial and legal education in gender and race bias, and provides feedback on proposed legislation to promote gender equity in the application of the law in family law proceedings.

Acknowledging that the people most impacted by the gender disparities in our court system are Black, Indigenous, and women of color, LGBTQ+ people, people living in poverty, and those with disabilities, the Family Law Committee works to improve access to the family law system and improve the collection and distribution of accurate data specific to these disenfranchised groups. The committee maintains relationships with partners in the law and justice community, working on goals and activities that align with the work of the Gender and Justice Commission.





SUCCESS INSIDE & OUT

Incarceration, Gender & Justice

The Incarceration, Gender & Justice Committee works to address issues facing justice-involved women and girls, including court access for incarcerated parents.

Members of this committee have partnered with the **National Association of Women Judges** (NAWJ) and Tacoma Community College to put on a women's reentry conference at Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women. Women at the conference can attend classes on finding jobs, getting re-licensed, starting businesses, ensuring successful family time, and other important components of transition. Building successful lives after prison is possible by focusing on change, learning from success stories, and making use of helpful resources. This is the core message of the annual Women's Conference, based on NAWJ's program "Success: Inside & Out."

In October 2024, the Gender and Justice Commission submitted a rule change proposal regarding **CR 12**, crafted by the Incarceration, Gender & Justice Committee, which would increase the response time frame for incarcerated individuals in civil matters from 20 days to 60 days. Incarcerated parents often do not have timely access to civil legal resources, forms, and processes, and are frequently defaulted in civil matters as a result. Incarcerated mothers are more likely to be primary caregivers of minor children, and this rule change would allow a better opportunity for their participation in civil cases involving children, as well as other matters. This proposal was adopted by the Supreme Court, with a suggested addition from the Superior Court Judges Association, on June 5, 2025, and goes into effect on September 1, 2025.



Tribal State Court Consortium

Tribal State Court Consortium

The Tribal State Court Consortium (TSCC) is a collaboration of the Minority and Justice Commission, Gender and Justice Commission, Administrative Office of the Courts, and tribal courts across Washington State. Created in 2013, TSCC aims to expand and increase communication and cooperation between state and tribal court judicial officers. TSCC provides an open, transparent forum where state and tribal court judicial officers can come together and discuss jurisdictional issues, gaps in services, and ways to develop lasting partnerships.

The TSCC holds an annual Spring Regional Meeting and partners with the Commissions on outreach and education events. In 2024, the TSCC began work on a protection order project that includes outreach to tribal courts to increase awareness about the Protection Order Document Sharing (PODS) tool and to gain more insight into current tribal court processes.

In October 2024, the TSCC participated in a House Civil Rights and Judiciary Committee work session on tribal courts. Chief Judge Cindy K. Smith (Suquamish Tribal Court) and Chief Judge Ronna Washines (Yakama Tribal Court) presented on issues facing tribal courts, including the need for additional training for new judicial officers and law enforcement officers and respect for tribal sovereignty with processes and databases used for protection orders.

TSCC compiles an annual report, which contains a wealth of information including details regarding:

- Legislative efforts relating to full faith and credit for tribal warrants.
- The TSCC webinar series regarding sex trafficking in Indigenous communities.
- The Protection Order Document Sharing (PODS) portal for judicial officers, designed to increase visibility of existing protection orders between tribal and state courts.

TSCC annual reports and details of TSCC activities and work can be found on [their website](#).



Policy & Partnership Highlights

Legislative Work Groups

2020

In October 2020, the **E2SHB 1517** Domestic Violence Work Groups, convened by the Gender and Justice Commission and led by Co-Chairs Judge Eric Lucas (Snohomish County Superior Court) and Judge Mary Logan (Spokane Municipal Court), submitted two reports to the Legislative Branch and Governor Inslee. The reports focused on the issues of **DV treatment** and **risk assessment**.

2021

In December 2021, the Gender and Justice Commission's **E2SHB 1320** Stakeholder Group submitted a report to the Legislature entitled *Civil Protection Orders: **E2SHB 1320** Stakeholder Group Recommendations to Support Access and Safety*. This report contained recommendations related to jurisdictional division of authority, best practices for minors, coercive control, and information sharing about protection orders between Washington State, Tribal, military, and other states' courts. The report may be found [here](#).

2022

In June 2022, the Stakeholder Group submitted additional recommendations and resources to the courts related to civil protection orders. This was the culmination of a year of work with stakeholders statewide. The group's recommendations are available [here](#).

Tracking Policy

In January 2023, the Commission convened its first official Legislative Committee, which meets throughout the legislative session to review proposed legislation for gender-related impacts to the justice system.

As a judicial branch commission, the Commission typically does not take positions on proposed legislation, unless it impacts the administration of justice, especially with respect to gender issues. However, our goal is to "eliminate gender bias in the legal profession and within the law and justice system." In order to achieve that goal, we have to stay informed about current events, including developments in the other branches of government that might impact our goals.

Embedded Librarianship

The Commission continues to partner with the Washington State Law Library through embedded librarianship. The partnership began in 2017, when Deputy State Law Librarian Laura Edmonston began working with the Commission on research tasks. In addition to this role, Ms. Edmonston now serves as the Chair of the Communications Committee.

2024

In October 2024, the Commission wrapped up leadership of the Crime Victim Services Work Group established by the Washington State Legislature pursuant to the 2023 budget bill (ESSB 5187, Sec. 918), and submitted its report to the Legislature. The multidisciplinary work group was convened by the Gender and Justice Commission and chaired by Judge Jacqueline High-Edward (Spokane County Superior Court). Members and contributors included judges, court staff, attorneys, advocates, and lived experts from across the state.

The Crime Victim Services Work Group was tasked with surveying the needs of survivors of gender-based violence in legal and community-based systems, assessing the different financial accounts that can be utilized for victim services, and developing a plan to standardize and expand access to services. The stakeholder group worked for just under one year to survey statewide resources, seek survivor and provider feedback, and identify gaps. The full report was submitted to the Legislature on October 1, 2024, and the Commission thanks all those who contributed to its creation. In collaboration with the Washington State Center for Court Research, the Work Group also created a statewide dashboard identifying legal and community resources for survivors, searchable by county or tribe.

In tasking the Commission with this work, the Legislature noted:

“Survivors of gender-based violence should be empowered in our state to choose how they want to respond to their situation from choosing to engage in the criminal system, the civil system, or to engage in community led services. As a state, we are responsible for ensuring that regardless of the choice made by the survivor, we have the resources, services, and support needed to assist them in their journey to safety and self-empowerment which involves multiple legal systems.”

(Washington State Legislature ESSB 5187, Sec. 918).

The full Crime Victim Services Work Group report can be found [here](#).

The dashboard of statewide tribal and state resources can be found [here](#).



Commission Co-Chair Justice Sheryl Gordon McCloud meets with UW-Tacoma and Central Washington University students in the State Law Library for a talk about women in law, including an overview of the Gender Justice Study.

Funding

Commission staff seek funding from a variety of sources to support its work. We thank our state and federal funding sources and our legislative partners for their dedication to gender equity in the justice system and the court's role in prevention and response to gender-based violence. In addition to operating funds from the Administrative Office of the Courts' budget, during this period, the Commission's work was supported by the following sources:

Department of Commerce – STOP Formula Grant Program

The Commission, through the Administrative Office of the Courts, has received and managed the five percent court allocation from the federal STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program (Office on Violence Against Women) since 2002. The funding supports staffing of the Tribal State Court Consortium's work on the issues of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking, and a project coordinator position to oversee Gender and Justice Commission projects related to gender-based violence. These projects include the development of educational programming and resources for judicial officers and court staff.

Specific Legislative Allocations

The Commission was grateful to be allocated specific legislative funds to support convening the 1320 Stakeholder Group and the Crime Victim Services Work Group, whose work is detailed on pages 18-19.

State Justice Institute Project Grant

In 2018, the Gender and Justice Commission was awarded a three-year State Justice Institute Project Grant that funded the work to implement the Gender Justice Study and related pilots.



Gender and Justice Commission Co-Chair Justice Gordon McCloud celebrates following her swearing in ceremony at the Temple of Justice with (L-R) AOC's Court Equity & Access Team Supervisor Crissy Anderson, Supreme Court Commissions Manager Kelley Amburgey-Richardson, and GJC member Elizabeth Hendren, Sexual Violence Law Center. Photo Provided by Crissy Anderson.

Supporters, Funders, & Partners

The Gender and Justice Commission is a group of lawyers, judges, academics, students, advocates, and others, established and supported by the Washington State Supreme Court. Our mission is to promote gender equality and eliminate gender bias in the legal profession and within the law and justice system.

We could not do our work effectively without the support of our funders. Thank you to our state and federal funding sources and our legislative partners for their consistent support of our efforts. The Commission also relies on robust partnerships with other organizations and individuals that are committed to ensuring equality in the justice system. We succeed when we leverage our joint resources in support of our missions, and we welcome new partners.

We hope this report will enhance your understanding of the issues and the efforts that are underway to ensure that justice works for everyone. Through collaboration, innovation, and education, we can reach our goals together.

In Memoriam

Judge Eric Z. Lucas (1954 - 2021)

Judge Lucas was first appointed to the Gender and Justice Commission in 2013. He served from then until June 2021, as one of the only commissioners to be appointed to more than two terms. During that time, Judge Lucas was a leader in the Commission's work on domestic violence, serving as Co-Chair of the HB 1163 and HB 1517 DV Work Groups. He testified to the legislature about his personal connections to the issue of domestic violence and was passionate about making the system more accessible for those who need protection.

In addition to his work with the Commission, Judge Lucas was an advocate for equal justice and helped lead the Superior Court Judges Association's Equality and Fairness Committee. He broke barriers himself as the first Black judge elected to Snohomish County Superior Court.



In Memoriam

Justice Susan Owens (1949 - 2025)

Justice Owens served on the Gender and Justice Commission from 2016-2019 and was a member of the Tribal State Court Consortium for many years. Justice Owens was a champion of tribal courts, and during her time with the Commission, she led the effort to obtain an Opinion from the Attorney General confirming Washington's obligation to enforce protection orders issued by tribal courts.

Another focus of Owens' career was improving judicial education on domestic violence cases. She was a national trainer on the topic, lecturing at the National College of Prosecuting Attorneys' Domestic Violence Conference, and co-authoring the Northwest Tribal Judges Association's Domestic Violence Manual.



GENDER AND JUSTICE COMMISSION

2020-2024 REPORT



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