



Judicial Performance Evaluation Program

In June 2000, the Idaho Judicial Council began a voluntary pilot program of judicial performance evaluations to promote self-improvement of members of the Idaho Judiciary. In this program, questionnaires were sent annually to certain attorneys, court personnel and jurors who were familiar with the practices of participating judges. The survey results were confidential and were given only to the judge who was subject of the evaluation. A relatively small number of judges volunteered to participate in this program.

In June 2013, the Idaho Supreme Court created a Judicial Performance Evaluation Committee with the purpose of strengthening the judicial performance evaluation program and providing evaluations to all judges on a continuing basis for judicial self-improvement, wellness, and education purposes. Funding was obtained through a grant from the State Justice Institute to enlist the assistance of the National Center for State Courts. The NCSC reviewed the existing survey system, developed a new survey-based judicial performance evaluation system, and provided additional guidance for implementing the new program.

The judicial performance evaluation program is an evaluative tool designed to provide confidential feedback to the judge for use in assessing areas of potential self-improvement. Survey results will be aggregated, with no personally identifying data, and provided to the office of the Administrative Director of the Courts. The Education Department will use the aggregated data to assist in developing appropriate educational goals and programs for the judiciary as a whole. In addition, limited funds may be available to provide educational opportunities and materials as appropriate for individual judges. The judicial performance evaluation will also assist district magistrate commissions in evaluating the performance of magistrate judges during their 18-month probationary period.

One-third of the judges in Idaho will be evaluated annually, with each new judge being evaluated approximately nine and eighteen months after the beginning of his or her first term on the bench and every third year thereafter. Each month, three to five judges are evaluated. As part of the evaluation process, feedback surveys will be distributed to attorneys and court professionals who have worked with the judge within the previous year.

The judicial evaluation program is not a tool for discipline of judges based on allegations of ethical violations, performance issues, or any other criteria. No information from the confidential performance evaluation surveys will be provided to the Idaho Judicial Council. Except for potential action by the District Magistrate Commission during a new magistrate's probationary period, no action will be taken respecting any individual judge as a result of the judicial performance evaluation. The program is administered by and within the office of the Administrative Director of the Courts. With the exception of initial evaluation of Magistrate judges within their 18-month probationary periods, for whom copies of the survey results are provided to the District Magistrate Commission, no copy of the individual

survey results will be retained or provided to anyone other than the judge who is the subject of the survey.

If you have any questions about the Judicial Performance Evaluation Program, please contact Andrea Patterson at (208) 947-7437 or apatterson@idcourts.net.