

Judicial Demeanor & Access to Justice

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Judicial Demeanor

What is good judicial demeanor?

Key qualities: fairness, impartiality, patience, professionalism, courtesy, and respect

Why?

- Perceptions of justice and legitimacy
- Impact on litigants, attorneys, witnesses, and the public

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Judicial Demeanor in Practice

- Maintaining order and decorum in the courtroom
- Listening skills and communication with all parties
- Managing high-emotion situations and self-represented litigants
- Avoiding bias and ensuring equal treatment
- *Common pitfalls:* impatience, discourtesy, unconscious bias

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Judicial Code of Conduct

- How do the Canons influence your judicial demeanor?
- *Common pitfalls:*

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Access to Justice

What is access to justice?

Ensuring everyone can participate fully in the legal process, regardless of income, status, or ability

Why?

- Barriers to access: financial, procedural, technological, linguistic, and physical

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The Intersection: How Judicial Demeanor Promotes Access to Justice

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The Intersection: How Judicial Demeanor Promotes Access to Justice

- Demeanor as a gateway to procedural fairness and trust
- Making the court accessible and welcoming for all
- Using plain language and clear communication
- Accommodating special needs: language access, disability, self-represented litigants

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Examples in Criminal Cases

- What kinds of situations arise in criminal cases that require the judge to focus on their demeanor?

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Practical Strategies for Justices of the Peace

- Self-assessment and reflection on demeanor
- Training and education on bias, cultural competence, and communication
- Courtroom management tips for maintaining decorum and accessibility
- Leveraging technology to expand access (remote hearings, online resources)
- Collaborating with legal aid, pro bono services, and community organizations

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Questions?

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