



Colorado Justice: Celebrating 40 years of fair
and impartial courts through merit selection

news

Colorado Judicial Branch
Mary J. Mullarkey, Chief Justice
Gerald Marroney, State Court Administrator

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Colorado Judicial Branch Launches Pilot Service-Improvement Program *21st Judicial District surveys to begin at 1:00 p.m. June 12 at the Mesa County Justice Center*

GRAND JUNCTION, Colo. – The 21st Judicial District is inviting you to be the judge in a pilot program designed to help the Colorado Judicial Branch gather needed information to ensure it is providing the best possible service to the public. The program is being launched at the Mesa County Justice Center (125 North Spruce Street) in Grand Junction and may be introduced in other judicial districts in the near future.

From June 12-14, judges, clerks and other Justice Center employees will volunteer their time to talk to people – in English and Spanish – about their experiences as jurors, parties to a case or as recipients of other Judicial Branch services. Attorneys, law enforcement officers and anybody else who does business with the courts also will be encouraged to participate. The judicial employees will be stationed outside the Justice Center for this three-day period and will ask people exiting the building if they had business with the court and are willing to participate in a brief anonymous survey.

The data will be used to measure public opinion about access to and fairness of the courts. People will be asked whether they had problems finding the Justice Center, whether they could easily understand the forms they needed, whether they felt safe in the building and other related questions.

Surveyors also will ask people whether they felt their case was handled in a fair manner, whether the judge or magistrate listened to them and had all the necessary information before making a decision and whether they felt they were treated with courtesy, understood what was happening in their case and were given clear information about the next step in their case.

“We can’t be sure we’re doing the best we can at conducting the business of the courts unless we measure how well we handle these fundamental tasks of our system of justice,” said 21st Judicial District Administrator Judith Vanderleest. “We plan to conduct regular follow-up surveys to gauge the effectiveness of any changes we make.”

“These are the people’s courts,” Supreme Court Chief Justice Mary Mullarkey said. “Coloradans deserve the best the Judicial Branch can possibly offer them.”

Similar surveys are in use by several other court systems including Arizona and the District of Columbia as part of a program developed by the National Center for State Courts.

“CourTools has provided us with valuable insight that has allowed us to strengthen the courts’ effectiveness while at the same time becoming more transparent,” said Dan Becker, Utah’s state court administrator.

Colorado’s 21st Judicial District, comprising Mesa County, saw 6,263 district-court cases filed and 16,857 county-court cases filed in fiscal 2006, the latest year for which complete statistics are available.

Editor’s Note: Photo and on-camera interview opportunities:

- Chief Judge Bottger – Tue 1-2:30 p.m., Wed. 9:30-11 a.m., Thurs 9:30-11 a.m.
- Judge Deister – Wed 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
- Judge Gurley – Wed 2:30-4 p.m.
- Judge Raaum – Wed 4-5 p.m.
- Magistrate Westbrook – Wed 1:30-2:30 p.m.