

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF MARYLAND
ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER ON ORIENTATION
AND MENTORING FOR NEW TRIAL JUDGES

WHEREAS, As part of its commitment to providing fair, efficient, and effective justice for all, the Judiciary provides robust support to new judges at the beginning of their tenure on the bench;

WHEREAS, Immediate formal and informal training of new judges organized by the administrative head of their courts, mentoring by experienced judges, and the New Trial Judge Orientation Program (NTJO) operated by the Judicial College of Maryland in conjunction with the Judicial Council's Education Committee are all important components of a well-rounded approach to providing robust support to new judges; and

WHEREAS, It is appropriate to update the policies applicable to the immediate training and mentoring of new judges,

NOW THEREFORE, pursuant to the authority conferred by Article IV, § 18 of the Maryland Constitution, it is this 10th day of September 2024, ordered as follows:

- (a) Definitions for purposes of this order.
 - (1) Administrative Judge means:
 - (A) The County Administrative Judge for a New Trial Judge appointed or elected to the Circuit Court for a county or Baltimore City, unless the New Trial Judge is the County Administrative Judge or will assume that position upon being sworn in;
 - (B) The Circuit Administrative Judge for a New Trial Judge who is the County Administrative Judge or will assume that position upon being sworn in;
 - (C) The District Administrative Judge for a New Trial Judge who is appointed to the District Court of Maryland.
 - (2) Judge Designate means a New Trial Judge who has not yet been sworn in.
 - (3) New Trial Judge means an individual who is newly appointed or elected to the Circuit Court for a county or Baltimore City or newly appointed to the District Court of Maryland, has not previously served as a judge on the same court, and has not yet completed all three phases of orientation set forth in this Order.

- (4) Orientation Judge means a judge designated by the Administrative Judge to assist during orientation.
- (b) Applicability and Compliance. These procedures are mandatory and apply to all New Trial Judges. Each New Trial Judge shall complete all training assigned by the Administrative Judge in accordance with the schedule established by the Administrative Judge. Each Administrative Judge shall ensure compliance with these procedures in the orientation and mentoring of each New Trial Judge in that Administrative Judge's jurisdiction. Each Administrative Judge may designate one or more Orientation Judges to assist with the orientation procedures.
- (c) Orientation of New Trial Judges shall proceed in three phases:
 - (1) Phase One, the Judge Designate Phase, occurs in the period after appointment or election and prior to swearing in.
 - (2) Phase Two, the Initial Training Phase, begins with the swearing in of a New Trial Judge and concludes at the end of the training period tailored to the experience of the New Trial Judge.
 - (3) Phase Three, the NTJO and Mentoring Phase, occurs during the first eighteen months following the conclusion of the Initial Training Phase.
- (d) Phase One: The Judge Designate Phase.
 - (1) Immediately following the appointment or election of a New Trial Judge, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) shall provide the Judge Designate's contact information to the applicable Administrative Judge. The Administrative Judge shall promptly schedule an initial meeting, which should occur before the Judge Designate is sworn in. That initial meeting shall address, among other topics, the timing and process for the Judge Designate to be sworn in, how the Initial Training Phase will proceed, and chambers space and staff support.
 - (2) Before the swearing in of a New Trial Judge, the State Court Administrator, in the case of a Circuit Court judge, or the Chief Judge of the District Court, in the case of a District Court judge, shall arrange for the Judge Designate to attend a one-day onboarding session and orientation in Annapolis. During the onboarding, the staff of the AOC and/or District Court Headquarters (DCHQ) shall:
 - (A) Describe the administrative services available to judges through the AOC or DCHQ.

- (B) Provide information about personnel- and personal security-related matters, including: (i) health plans and options; (ii) the Judicial Retirement System; (iii) payroll deductions; (iv) personal security, including the availability of a home security assessment and subsidy; and (v) the Office of Information Privacy and the ability to restrict access to personally identifiable information.
 - (C) Provide information on ethics matters, including: (i) required financial disclosures; (ii) closing a private practice or separating from a law firm and the requirements of § 1-203 of the Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article; (iii) political activity, including constraints; (iv) elections, where applicable; and (v) the Maryland Code of Judicial Conduct.
 - (D) Provide the most current copy of the Strategic Plan for the Maryland Judiciary and information on the governance structure of the Maryland Judiciary, including the Maryland Judicial Council.
 - (E) Provide information on Judiciary Information Systems access and IT security training.
 - (F) Provide District Court Judge Designates with information regarding the District Court manuals, policies, procedures, and directives.
- (3) During onboarding or in a separate meeting before the swearing in of a New Trial Judge, a representative of the Judicial College of Maryland shall:
- (A) Provide the Judge Designate with information on how to access the Judicial College's Digital Library.
 - (B) Provide electronic copies of all relevant bench books, bench cards, and the most recent NTJO materials.
 - (C) Provide the Judge Designate with a Self-Assessment on judicial education needs. The Judge Designate shall complete the Self-Assessment within three days of onboarding. Each Administrative Judge and any Orientation Judges shall use the Self-Assessment, along with other available information, in tailoring training, meetings, and observations during the Initial Training Phase and more generally in supporting the Judge Designate.
 - (D) Provide the Judge Designate with an overview of (i) continuing judicial education requirements and opportunities, including information about the required online courses on preventing sexual

harassment, applicable workplace laws and regulations, judicial ethics, and unconscious bias; (ii) the NTJO; and (iii) the Mentoring Program.

- (E) Provide a copy of the Amended Administrative Order on Continuing Education and Outreach and Leadership of Judges and Magistrates (or any superseding administrative order).

- (4) As described further in Phase Three, a Mentor Judge shall be assigned to the Judge Designate during the Judge Designate Phase.

(e) Phase Two: Initial Training Phase.

- (1) The Administrative Judge or Orientation Judge shall consider information from the New Trial Judge's Self-Assessment, along with other available information about the New Trial Judge's past experience and educational needs, in planning the Initial Training Phase and ongoing support.
- (2) If not covered during the Judge Designate Phase, the Administrative Judge or Orientation Judge shall take appropriate steps to introduce the New Trial Judge to the court and judicial and court staff, provide a tour of court facilities, and provide other introductions, tours, and trainings as appropriate (e.g., touring the local detention center and receiving Maryland Electronic Courts training).
- (3) The Administrative Judge or Orientation Judge shall arrange programmatic briefings by key personnel who work with or provide input to judges on the court.
- (4) The New Trial Judge shall sit in on court proceedings with other judges as directed by the Administrative Judge or Orientation Judge, at first as an observer and then handling proceedings with feedback or assistance from an experienced judge, as appropriate. Such court proceedings shall include a broad range of cases that come before the court, with particular emphasis on any areas of need identified based on the New Trial Judge's prior experience.
- (5) The New Trial Judge shall be informed about, shown, and, as appropriate, visit any available Alternative Dispute Resolution resources or resources for self-represented litigants in applicable court facilities.
- (6) A circuit court New Trial Judge shall:

- (A) Spend at least one day in the District Court observing proceedings in that Court, including initial appearances and bail proceedings before a District Court Commissioner; and
 - (B) In courts that use magistrates, observe relevant magistrate proceedings.
- (7) The Initial Training Phase shall last a minimum of two weeks and for such additional time as is appropriate considering the needs of the court and the prior experience and reasonable educational needs of the New Trial Judge. The Administrative Judge shall exercise reasonable discretion in determining the length of the Initial Training Phase and shall clearly communicate to the New Trial Judge what steps will be required to complete the Initial Training Phase.
- (f) Phase Three: The NTJO and Mentoring Phase.
 - (1) A New Trial Judge shall attend and be in residence at the next scheduled NTJO presented through the Judicial College of Maryland (including any subsequent update course), along with any other courses recommended by the Administrative Judge or Orientation Judge in anticipation of pending docket assignments or rotations. The Administrative Judge shall promptly inform the New Trial Judge and the Judicial College whether the New Trial Judge should attend the next available offerings of one or more of Family Law University, Criminal Law University, and the Child Abuse, Neglect and Delinquency Options Conference.
 - (2) New Trial Judge Mentoring Program. The purpose of the New Trial Judge Mentoring Program is to assist New Trial Judges in the transition to their new positions. The Mentoring Program will begin during the Judge Designate Phase and continue during the Initial Training Phase, but will take place mostly during the NTJO and Mentoring Phase.
 - (A) The Mentoring Program shall be administered by the New Trial Judge Mentoring Subcommittee of the Judicial Council's Education Committee, according to rules and procedures that will be approved by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Maryland. The Subcommittee will assign an active or senior (recall) judge as a mentor to each New Trial Judge.
 - (B) As soon as a mentor is assigned, the mentor shall arrange an initial conference with the New Trial Judge. At the initial conference, the mentor shall explain the role of the mentor and the Mentoring

Program and address any questions or concerns raised by the New Trial Judge.

- (C) In the first few weeks after assignment, the mentor shall be in frequent contact with the New Trial Judge, emphasizing a willingness to assist as needed. Thereafter, the mentor shall be in contact periodically as appropriate, but not less frequently than the minimum requirements as outlined by the Mentoring Program.
- (D) Once the New Trial Judge begins to hear cases, the mentor should be available to meet with the New Trial Judge as necessary and should be available to answer questions, offer guidance and advice, and listen attentively, diplomatically, and without bias. Under no circumstances should the duties of a mentor include substituting the mentor's judgment for that of the New Trial Judge in the judicial decision-making process.
- (E) If possible: (i) each mentor should observe the New Trial Judge in court and provide feedback or commentary on the New Trial Judge's strengths and areas for further development; and (ii) each New Trial Judge should observe the mentor judge in court and discuss best practices and pitfalls to avoid.
- (F) Each mentor shall complete a contact report in the form and at intervals prescribed by the New Trial Judge Mentoring Subcommittee.
- (G) Except as otherwise required by the Supreme Court, the Judicial Code of Conduct, or other law, information pertaining to the New Trial Judge's performance that is obtained by the mentor during the formal mentoring relationship shall be held in confidence by the mentor.
- (g) This Order applies to all New Trial Judges appointed or elected after the date of this Order and, to the extent practicable, for any other New Trial Judge appointed within the year preceding the date of this Order.

- (h) The Administrative Order on Orientation and Mentoring for New Trial Judges dated August 25, 2016 is rescinded effective immediately.

/s/ Matthew J. Fader
Matthew J. Fader
Chief Justice
Supreme Court of Maryland

Filed: September 10, 2024

/s/ Gregory Hilton
Gregory Hilton
Clerk
Supreme Court of Maryland

Pursuant to the Maryland Uniform Electronic Legal
Materials Act (§§ 10-1601 et seq. of the State
Government Article) this document is authentic.



Gregory Hilton, Clerk