

# **TENNESSEE JUDICIAL FAMILY NETWORK**

## **GENERAL OVERVIEW**

The Tennessee Judicial Family Network is an initiative of the Judicial Family Institute Committee of the Tennessee Judicial Conference. The network's primary focus is to identify the needs of and challenges confronting judicial families today while responding appropriately by making available useful information relevant to such issues.

The Judicial Family Network supports judges and their families through a broad range of programs which include a judicial mentoring program, an association of judicial spouses and families, annual conference plenary sessions and online resources. The Tennessee Judicial Family Network strives to convey a positive message that the judicial conference cares about the families of judges and is available to support their needs.

## **JUDICIAL FAMILY INSTITUTE**

The Tennessee Judicial Family Institute was established as an ad hoc committee in 2003. Its purpose is "to encourage an exchange of positive information regarding the responsibilities and challenges of judicial families". Among other things, the institute serves as a valuable resource for judges and their family members with respect to a full range of pertinent topics.

In June 2005, the Tennessee Judicial Conference approved the transition of the Tennessee Judicial Family Institute (TJFI) from an ad hoc committee to a full standing committee of the Conference. In October 2005, the Tennessee Judicial Conference adopted for 2006 implementation the Tennessee Judicial Mentoring Program for new judges.

The TJFI has been patterned from the National Judicial Family Institute committee of the Conference of Chief Justices. Information for judicial families is presently being offered in approximately 19 states, the District of Columbia and two U.S. territories. As TJFI continues to encourage the exchange of information and resources within the judicial family community, it plans to make available information on relevant judicial family issues which include the following:

- Transition to public life
- Judicial family ethics and conflicts of interest

- **Judicial isolation and social relationships**
- **Stress management**
- **Judicial children and the high profile case**
- **Judicial family security strategies**
- **Judicial family political campaigns**
- **Media relations**
- **Time management for public, professional and personal activities**
- **Substance abuse/impairment concerns**

### **TENNESSEE JUDICIAL MENTORING PROGRAM**

Tennessee's new-judge mentoring program has been established as a means of orienting new judges to the bench. This initiative is designed to formalize individual mentoring relationships among participating members of the Tennessee judiciary. Through the program, a mentor judge is assigned to assist and counsel each new judge of the conference. The primary aim of the mentoring program is to provide an appropriate, comprehensive approach to the responsibilities and challenges immediately experienced by new judges. As mentoring is only one component of socializing and inducting new judges into the judiciary, additional resources, such as pre-bench orientation and post-induction education, are contemplated. All new judges are encouraged to engage actively in the mentoring process for at least one year following election or appointment to the bench.

For the new judge, being mentored is an affirming experience which facilitates the judge's ability to become an involved member of the conference and the judiciary. For the judicial conference, mentoring serves as a vehicle by which a new judge can more easily learn both the formal and informal structures of the organization and be an early contributor to the conference's success. The judiciary is further shaped and advanced by the new judge's contribution to its endeavors. A successful mentoring program promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary. Whether mentoring is individually engaged in or formalized through the establishment of a mentoring program, it creates and provides far beyond what was originally contemplated. Mentoring leaves a lasting legacy.

## **ASSOCIATION OF JUDICIAL SPOUSES AND FAMILIES**

The Association of Judicial Spouses and Families marked its inception during the Annual Conference of the Tennessee Judicial Conference in June 2006. Under the leadership of Ms. Catherine Barker, wife of Chief Justice William M. Barker, the Association hosted an organizational meeting with an emphasis upon developing and implementing a support network for the corporate judicial family of the Tennessee Judicial Conference, similar to one offered by the State of Ohio.

As the Association endeavors to identify the needs and concerns of judicial families, this supportive network of judicial spouses and families will develop future educational opportunities with an exchange of information pertinent to issues challenging judicial families today.

## **JUDICIAL CONFERENCE PLENARY SESSIONS**

In June 2004, during the Tennessee Judicial Conference's annual meeting in Nashville, Tennessee, judges, spouses and other judicial family members convened in plenary session to consider judicial family topics including personality profiles, ethics and avoiding conflicts of interest, managing the judge's own family challenges and stress management. These joint sessions benefitted both judges and their families by addressing appropriate means of functioning effectively while dealing with the challenges associated with public family life. A panel discussion of participants which involved judges, judicial spouses and judicial children focused upon judicial family issues. Moderator Jan Aikman Dickson of the National Judicial Family Institute Committee facilitated the plenary session discussion.

The TJFI has endeavored to promote similar plenary sessions during subsequent annual judicial conferences. In 2005, a session titled "Judicial Family Security" was presented. For 2006, a session addressing "Judicial Family Ethics" included presentations on political activity by judicial family members, gifts to family members of judges, disqualification based on family relations and a general overview of the judicial family network. In addition to plenary sessions of interest to judges and judicial family members, future annual conferences may include separate sessions focusing upon topics of significance for the judicial spouse and family member.

## **ONLINE RESOURCES**

Periodically, information pertinent to judicial family issues may be found on the website of the Tennessee Administrative Office of the Courts located at [www.tsc.state.tn.us/](http://www.tsc.state.tn.us/) . A broad range of articles and other pertinent information may also be found on the National Judicial Family Institute website at <http://jfi.ncsconline.org/> . During the Tennessee Judicial Conference in October 2006, information was distributed to judges inviting judicial families to view the JFI website for articles of interest on such valuable topics as ethics, quality of life, children of judges and security issues.