



Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

Race, Equity, Inclusion, and Access Subcommittee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 2, 2026 // 12:15 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.

Meeting location Virtual (Zoom)

Co-Chairs Justice Rebecca Dallet and Judge Jon Richards

Subcommittee Members Present:	Justice Rebecca Dallet, Ashley Billig, Clerk of Courts Rebecca Matoska-Mentink, Judge Elliott Levine, Jane Graham-Jennings, Judge Emily Lonergan, Jerome Dillard, Judge Carl Ashley, Kent Lovern, Michael Blauw, Jennifer Bias, Senator LaTonya Johnson, Mary Triggiano
Subcommittee Members Not Present:	Kelli Thompson, Milwaukee City Attorney Evan Goyke, Neal "Chip" Nielsen, Judge Jon Richards
DOJ Staff:	Ryan Anderson, Sabrina Gentile, Mike Austin, Katie Snell, Brad Kelly, Erica Beckman
Others:	Ann Olson, Rhonda Frank-Loron, Ryan Lashua

Welcome and Opening Comments

Subcommittee Co–Chair Justice Dallet welcomed members to the meeting at 12:15 p.m. Quorum was present.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Motion to Approve REIA Subcommittee Meeting Minutes for February 12, 2026.

Motion was made by Judge Carl Ashley and seconded by Judge Emily Lonergan to approve the REIA Subcommittee February 12, 2026, meeting minutes.

The motion passed on a voice vote.

Attorney Recruitment and Retention

Justice Rebecca Dallet explained that this subcommittee is in position to support attorney recruitment and retention, which is an issue experienced across the state. While some actions are already being done, this subcommittee could brainstorm additional elements, such as:

- Having access to justice commission, involving some type of non-lawyer participation in the criminal justice system. This may fall under supervision of other attorneys, similar to student practice.
- Looking into impact of other states having money set aside to encourage rural and public interest practice. Wisconsin has a small element like this, but this subcommittee could explore pursuing this further.
- Court is continuing to discuss this issue and explore other strategies, how to make courts more accessible (e.g., Zoom).

Mary Triggiano added that she has worked in a community-based law program, and Judge Levine suggested maybe bringing these reports regarding attorney recruitment to the CJCC. La Crosse County is working on an “attorney incubator” to encourage attorneys to come to La Crosse.

Judge Carl Ashley said it’s a constitutional crisis if there are not enough attorneys to serve the public in a timely fashion, and it will get worse if no one is talking about how to address this problem. There was a suggestion for a satellite law school, but it was not a solution. Judge Ashley concluded that consequences of this issue are dire enough that options should be considered and that this subcommittee should work on this.

Jennifer Bias seconds the notion that this issue is important and should be discussed in this subcommittee, adding that it does not take long for a person to experience inequitable unfairness due to the inefficiencies of the criminal justice system (waiting to get legal services; if someone is denied bond). Bias noted that many trained law practitioners do not stay in Wisconsin after being trained here, and she asks how we can make them stay. Numbers of practitioners in Wisconsin are drastically low compared to Iowa, Minnesota, and Michigan.

Rebecca Matoska-Mentink added that internet access is part of the issue; many places do not have access to steady broadband/internet or the necessary equipment (e.g., cameras, audio/visual equipment for Zoom, etc.). These are county resources that we can’t reevaluate until the next budget cycle. Maybe we can work out a dual budget system supported by both county and state?

Justice Dallet suggested creating a workgroup to discuss/identify the key points on this issue. Ashley Billig asked about available data comparing Wisconsin to other states’ access to legal representation.

Ann Olsen added the following statistics to the chat regarding legal presentation in Wisconsin:

- An average of just under 80% of Marquette Law graduates reported starting law careers in Wisconsin after graduation; UW Law is closer to 63% of graduates are employed in Wisconsin.
- As of 2024, 1,956 unique defense attorneys in criminal felony cases in 2024 compared to 2,281 in 2017.

Judge Levine added that smaller and medium-sized firms need specialists in certain areas. In the past, law practice covered multiple types of legal cases, but that’s no longer the case. Law practice has changed; now they need specialists, especially in rural areas.

Matoska-Mentink opined that law school graduates lack experience and suggested apprenticeships would make new attorneys more valuable. Some prosecutors appear in court under guidance by the DAs office, but some counties have too many new prosecutors and experienced ones lack time to mentor them. She also added that not everyone can afford law school and advised, when reviewing data from the state bar, to keep in mind that many of the licensed attorneys listed will include those who no longer practice, either due to retirement or merely continuing to pay their dues.

Justice Dallet expressed curiosity about what states are doing apprenticeships like this and whether it could be implemented in Wisconsin but also expressed doubt that law school deans would be supportive.

When Judge Ashley asked how many programs (prosecution and defense) are still functioning and running/recruiting well, Jennifer Bias answered yes, adding that UW Madison is mirroring the Marquette University program to have students work alongside staff for experience, continuing their work through summers. They also have exchange programs, working paid positions through summer while they are studying for the bar. While the number of student participants is down since COVID, the programs remain ongoing.

The subcommittee agrees to put this on a future agenda for further discussion.

Inclusive Communications Workgroup

Judge Elliott Levine reported that their workgroup has met with several professionals (e.g. speech pathology, cognitive deficits) to discuss best practices for adjusting processes such as plea colloquies, to serve people with communication needs/deficits. Michele Levine shared some international research on speech pathology and its involvement in the criminal justice system and will share with the subcommittee. That research also includes an assessment resource for how to determine if an individual has communication needs. It also touches on traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) that often occur as a result of domestic violence against women.

Leah Simon from the deaf community also participated with the workgroup, about how deaf individuals participate in the criminal justice system.

At the next meeting, the subcommittee will hear from Joe Wszalek to discuss revising the plea colloquy from his perspective as the founder of the Center for Neurolaw and Equity.

Jury Diversity Updates & Discussion: Juror Appreciation Week, PSA Discussion

Matoska-Mentink reached out to clerks regarding potential willingness to participate in juror appreciation week. When Justice Dallet asked about concrete action items, Matoska-Mentink responded that she and Ann Olsen are working on circulating juror appreciation materials. Also, there is a conference in June where they can promote jury participation and ask judges to encourage their clerks to work collaboratively on this. When asked about the value/cost of banners and trinkets to promote juror participation and appreciation, Matoska-Mentink opined banners were good but trinkets vary by county. She suggested offering a variety of sizes for the banners. She also advised that last time, the state bar funded the banners, noting that their logo is on the banners.

Justice Dallet asked about sports/public figures promoting juror position. Judge Ashley stated he would call Brewers representatives and ask their county's clerk of courts, county executive, and other figures to create a collaborative message. Judge Ashley mentioned the county executive did a public service announcement with him about juror participation during Covid and thought that could be replicated.

Driver's License Failure to Pay Forfeiture Suspensions

The topic was tabled for next subcommittee meeting.

Additional Topic for Discussion

Judge Ashley brought up mental health in Wisconsin youth, and that parents do not have the experience and/or training to support the kids through that trauma. Youth do not have the mental health support to address their trauma, and it's important for this subcommittee to address this issue and promote more mental health access to citizens early on, to prevent contact with criminal justice system. What is this subcommittee's lane and what can we do to proactively address this issue?

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjourn

Motion to Adjourn was made by Rebecca Matoska-Mentink and seconded by Jennifer Bias.

The motion passed on a voice vote, and meeting adjourned at 1:07 p.m.

2026 Meetings

August 6

October 8

December 3