



National Association for Presiding Judges and Court Executive Officers

Resolution 11

In Support of Implementation of Clear Communications and Streamlined Procedures in Trial Courts

WHEREAS, for many years National Association for Presiding Judges and Court Executive Officers and its precursor organization, the National Conference of Metropolitan Courts have worked diligently to promote access to justice for all individuals; and

WHEREAS, legal language and court processes are complex and historically designed by and for legal professionals; and

WHEREAS, suggestions to improve the clarity of court communications and to streamline court procedures have been offered by various professional court and judicial improvement groups and scholars; and

WHEREAS, the judiciary has an obligation to be accessible to, and communicate clearly with, all who use the courts; and

WHEREAS, court users include diverse groups of individuals with different cultural and educational backgrounds and linguistic capabilities, including people with limited literacy, with limited English proficiency, and with learning, cognitive, physical, and other disabilities; and

WHEREAS, courts at all levels must communicate court procedures and legal requirements clearly and effectively to all individuals so that they may be full participants in the justice system; and

WHEREAS, courts should provide appropriate training for court staff in order to accomplish these goals and to assist the public in effectively navigating the justice system; and

WHEREAS, when court procedures and legal requirements are streamlined justice can be more accessible to all and accomplished in a more cost-effective manner;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Association for Presiding Judges and Court Executive Officers urge courts, when drafting policies, procedures, and protocols, as well as associated documents, forms, and other information, (1) to write in a manner that is clear, concise, and easily comprehensible to all court users; (2) to make them publicly available online

and in physical locations where they are readily accessible to court users; and (3) where possible, to make them uniform statewide within the court system; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Association for Presiding Judges and Court Executive Officers urge courts to explore other ways, in addition to plain language, to help court users navigate the justice system, including: visual prompts (design features, infographics, symbols and signage); online services (web content, social media, explanatory videos, audio content, live chat platforms); and other public information tools (kiosks, public service campaigns, applications for mobile electronic devices and other technologies); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Association for Presiding Judges and Court Executive Officers urge courts to consider, where appropriate and practicable, streamlining court procedures and legal requirements; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Association for Presiding Judges and Court Executive Officers urge the National Center for State Courts and other national organizations to provide assistance to states working toward these goals.

Adopted by the Board of Directors at their meeting on August 21, 2019, in Minneapolis, MN