

Civility as a Key to Public Trust and Confidence

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Lots on professionalism and standards of conduct

- North Carolina Code of Judicial Conduct
 - Applies to magistrates as officers of the District Court.
- North Carolina Judicial Standards Commission
 - But Commission not authorized to hear complaints about magistrates, clerks of court, prosecutors...
- Magistrates Code of Conduct in works???
- Laws addressing magistrate conduct and removal. NC Const. Art. IV, sec. 17(3); G.S. 7A-173; G.S. 14-230.

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Civility Defined

- At simplest: polite, reasonable and respectful behavior. (Webster’s Dictionary)
- More nuanced: “claiming and caring for one’s identity, needs, and beliefs without degrading someone else’s in the process.” That requires effective communication, good listening, respect, and engagement. (The Institute for Civility in Government; see <https://www.instituteforcivility.org/>)

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Can civility make a difference?

- Studies show positive impact of promoting a culture of civility in health care provider environment, nursing, general workplace.
- Civility can point toward sincere respect. Viewed by many as a core principle of professionalism.



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Outcomes in studies include:

- Increased positive emotions for both the giver and receiver
- People treated with respect feel more valued, which may increase productivity
- Trust is strengthened
- Enthusiasm is heightened
- People become more altruistic, courteous, helpful, and encouraging
- People feel more connected



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Principles of Civility for the Courts

- Developed by National Judicial College in 2013.
- NJC sponsored a gathering of judges, attorneys, system advocates, and scholars to lay out concrete ways in which judges and officers of the court may incorporate civility into their daily work.



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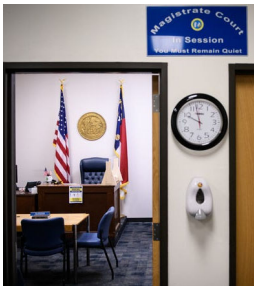
- The NJC gathering of judicial officials saw civility as a key to professionalism and assuring fair administration of justice and resolution of disputes.
- Created a bench card with quick, easy to implement tips.
- See judges.org/principles-of-civility

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The NJC Civility Principles

- 1 Prioritize courtesy and treat others with respect at all times
- 2 Remember time is precious for everyone
- 3 Preserve and improve the law, the legal system, and associated dispute resolution processes
- 4 Effectively and clearly communicate your role and expectations (procedural fairness)

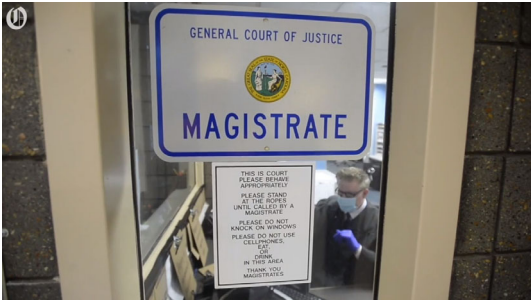
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▪ Civil magistrate court. Cumberland County Courthouse. October, 2020. Photo by Fayetteville Observer.

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Arrest Processing Center. Magistrate Court Services.
Mecklenburg County. April 1, 2020. Photo by Charlotte Observer.



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Magistrate Pam Tutterrow performs a wedding ceremony. Iredell County Hall of Justice. February, 2017. Photo courtesy of Statesville Record & Landmark.



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1 Prioritize courtesy and treat others with respect at all times

- Keep a calm demeanor.
- Be engaged in the process by practicing good listening skills.
- Practice and promote procedural fairness.
- Introduce yourself and address parties by name.



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2 Remember time is precious for everyone

- Begin and end proceedings according to reasonably-set schedule and time.
- Make decisions and rulings in a timely way.
- Disclose and keep all advised when a matter taken under advisement will be addressed.
- Explain or acknowledge delays.



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3 Preserve and improve the law, the legal system, and associated dispute resolution processes

- Practice judicial leadership by taking the idea of civility to the community.
- Join with other court system actors to initiate community outreach.



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4 Effectively and clearly communicate your role and expectations (procedural fairness)

- Conduct proceedings so that the parties have a voice to tell their story, understand the process and what is expected of them, perceive the court system is neutral and treats those involved in each case with respect.
- Layout expectations for those who appear before you:
 - Consider perceptions of bias in verbal and non-verbal communication



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Breakout Groups!



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Breakout Group Questions

- 1) Talk about a court situation in which someone exhibiting civility made others feel positive. What specific actions did the person take?
- 2) What concrete actions can you take to give people around you a sense that you will behave as a neutral in your magistrate role?
- 3) Talk about a situation in which you have applied any of the ideas embodied in the Principles of Civility. What, specifically, did you do?
- 4) What are good listening skills?

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Breakout question #1 discussion

- 1) Talk about a court situation in which someone exhibiting civility made others feel positive. What specific actions did the person take?

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Breakout question #2 discussion

2) What concrete actions can you take to give people around you a sense that you will behave as a neutral in your magistrate role?



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Breakout question #3 discussion

3) Talk about a situation in which you have applied any of the ideas embodied in the Principles of Civility. What, specifically, did you do?



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Breakout question #4 discussion

4) What are good listening skills?



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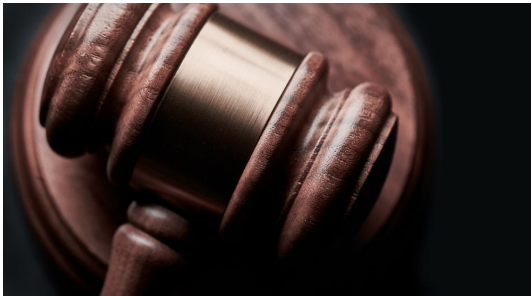
#4 What are good listening skills?

- Giving speaker full attention
- Making meaningful eye contact
- Voice signals that you are listening, not necessarily agreeing or signaling a direction for the speaker to take
- Having posture of listening
- Intentionally ignoring distractions
- Asking questions to assure understanding

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Wrap up



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