



A L A S K A

Judicial Observers, Inc.

**2014 Biennial Report
to the**

Alaska Judicial Council

April 1, 2012 through March 31, 2014

increasing public awareness of our judicial system



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A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We are pleased to present this 2014 Biennial Report to the Alaska Judicial Council, the Alaska State Legislature and the citizens of Alaska. Alaska Judicial Observers encourages citizens to become involved in the judicial process by volunteering to observe in courtrooms. We are proud to give citizens the opportunity to participate in the judicial process.

Alaska Judicial Observers is not affiliated with any advocacy group.

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Foreword

by

Susanne DiPietro, Executive Director, Alaska Judicial Council

The Alaska Judicial Council is a citizens' commission created by Alaska's constitution to nominate qualified persons for judgeships, to evaluate the performance of judges and to make recommendations to improve the administration of justice. To fulfill its constitutional responsibility to evaluate judicial performance, the Council considers many sources of information, including surveys of peace and probation officers, attorneys, court system employees, social workers, jurors, public hearings and other forms of public comment.

The Judicial Council evaluates judicial performance in order to make recommendations to the public who vote on whether to retain judges. The Council's evaluations are important, not only because they educate the public, but also because they help educate judges.

In its evaluation process, the Judicial Council incorporates the observations of Alaska Judicial Observers volunteers. The experience of most Alaska Judicial Observers volunteers is broad-based. They typically observe many different judges in many different types of proceedings. They are trained about the nature of judicial proceedings and how to be good observers of those proceedings. Finally, Alaska Judicial Observers volunteers play no role in the court proceedings other than observers. For these reasons, the Judicial Council appreciates the work of Alaska Judicial Observers volunteers as an independent and comprehensive source of information about judges.

Alaska Judicial Observers, Inc. Program Information

Alaska Judicial Observers, Inc. (AJO) is not affiliated with any advocacy, defense, prosecution or civil liberties group. We are the only independent court observer program in Alaska and one of a handful in the United States. It is because of this independence that we are able to collect neutral, unbiased evaluations and provide to the Alaska Judicial Council and the people of Alaska a report that reflects the citizen's perspective of judicial performance.

AJO produces a biennial report in even numbered years that sets out the results of evaluations conducted by its volunteers. AJO shares this report with the Alaska Judicial Council. Council members consider the report when they recommend whether voters should retain judges in office. The report is available to the public. This helps to enhance judicial accountability and promotes the public's understanding of the court system. AJO also provides the report to judges to help them improve their performance.

Volunteers are screened to ensure that they have not been a victim of a violent crime, have no criminal background and have no cases pending before the courts. Accompanied by the executive director, assistant director or a trainer, each volunteer goes through approximately 40 hours of classroom and courtroom training. Neutrality and objectivity are emphasized, as are the role of the observer to maintain an impartial attitude and to never make a personal judgment of guilt or innocence.

The criteria used for AJO's judicial evaluations have been reviewed by the Alaska Judicial Council. An evaluation form is filled out by the observer following each proceeding and volunteers are encouraged to include comments that reinforce their ratings. These comments are meant to be constructive, to help better shape an efficient and professional process and to assist legal professionals in showing sensitivity to any special needs of the public.

Court observers attend educational workshops where topics include sentencing, bail bonding, electronic trial preparation and jail and crime lab tours. The public defender, district attorney and judges all participate in an overview of their specific roles in the judicial process.

Data For Judges Appearing In 2014 Biennial Report

Table 1. Evaluation hours, number of individual observers and 2014 overall ratings.

Name	Evaluation Hours	Number of Observers	2014 Overall Rating
Eric Aarseth	49.0	19	3.67
Carl Bauman	59.3	10	3.71
Jo-Ann Chung	86.5	28	3.34
Brian Clark	67.0	23	3.76
Leslie Dickson	28.0	13	3.28
Catherine Easter	49.6	17	3.80
William Estelle	89.6	11	3.49
Andrew Guidi	65.3	25	3.47
Patrick J. Hanley	14.3	10	3.74
Gregory Heath	34.7	7	3.76
Jennifer Henderson	33.0	14	3.40
Charles Huguelet	27.2	7	3.50
Sharon Illsley	65.1	8	3.41
Kari Kristiansen	66.6	7	3.74
Erin Marston	21.9	13	3.39
Patrick McKay	57.1	19	3.65
Gregory Miller	138.6	29	3.56
Anna Moran	49.3	9	3.64
William Morse	55.3	22	3.62
Gregory Motyka	58.6	22	3.48
Paul Olson	57.5	19	3.57
Frank Pfiffner	68.0	26	3.24
Stephanie Rhoades	80.7	24	3.64
Mark Rindner	48.6	20	3.70
Kevin Saxby	107.7	28	3.50
Eric Smith	54.1	11	3.68
Jack Smith	158.5	28	3.54
Michael Spaan	136.5	25	3.48
John Suddock	54.3	18	3.92
Alex Swiderski	46.3	18	3.68
Sen Tan	52.6	14	3.59
Phillip Volland	131.0	27	3.57
David Wallace	60.8	23	3.82
Pamela Scott Washington	77.0	25	3.58
Vanessa White	72.7	9	3.86
John Wolfe	45.5	9	3.68
Michael Wolverton	105.9	26	3.66
David Zwink	31.8	7	3.46
Total	2505.5		

Data For Judges Appearing In 2014 Biennial Report (continued)

Table 2. Evaluations categorized by criminal or civil case type.

Case Type	Count	Percentage
Civil Cases	816	36.0
Criminal Cases	1448	64.0
Totals	2264	100.0

Table 3. Evaluations categorized by case description.

Case Description	Count	Percentage
Arraignment	156	6.9
Change of Plea	126	5.6
Civil Trial	308	13.6
Criminal Trial	472	20.8
Domestic Violence Hearing	62	2.7
Jury Selection	167	7.4
Pre-indictment Hearing	8	0.4
Pretrial Conference	30	1.3
Sentencing	67	3.0
Small Claims	29	1.3
Trial Call	16	0.7
Other Hearings	823	36.3
Totals	2264	100.0

Data For Judges Not Appearing In 2014 Biennial Report

In many locations magistrates, masters, and judges pro tem also hear District and Superior Court proceedings. The following is the amount of time observers spent in those proceedings. Also listed are judges who were recently appointed to the bench or whose term ended during the evaluation period.

Table1. Evaluation hours.

Name	Title	Evaluation Hours
Sidney Billingslea	Magistrate	0.8
Larry Card	Judge (retired)	37.7
Matthew Christian	Magistrate	37.7
Suzanne Cole	Master	8.2
Craig Condie	Magistrate	15.3
Beverly Cutler	Judge (retired)	7.3
Pat Douglass	Judge	9.6
Martin Fallon	Magistrate	6.1
William Fuld	Judge (retired)	2.7
Una Gandbhir	Magistrate	0.9
Stephanie Joannides	Judge (retired)	2.0
Jonathan Lack	Master	6.6
Leonard Linton	Magistrate	12.0
John Lohff	Judge (retired)	1.6
Warren Matthews	Justice (retired)	7.2
Donna McCready	Magistrate	3.3
Danforth Ogg	Magistrate	9.4
Peter Ramgren	Magistrate	3.3
Catherine Rogers	Magistrate	5.8
Richard Shamberg	Magistrate	4.5
James Stanley	Magistrate	3.7
Trevor Stephens	Judge	3.0
Jennifer Wells	Magistrate	34.3
Total		223.0

Data For All Judges Observed

The following data represents all activities by Alaska Judicial Observers volunteers from April 1, 2012, through March 31, 2014.

Table 1. Summary data.

Total volunteer hours	4716.8
Total evaluation hours	2728.5
Total evaluations	2543
Criminal evaluations	1639
Civil evaluations	904
Average evaluation hours	1.1

Judicial Evaluation Criteria

Judges are evaluated using criteria reviewed by the Alaska Judicial Council. Evaluations focus on our perception of the judge's behavior and attitude at the bench. The ten criteria used by Alaska Judicial Observers are listed below. The first eight criteria are evaluated on a scale of one to five with the following meanings:

1 = poor 2 = deficient 3 = acceptable/average 4 = good 5 = excellent

The last two criteria describe specific behaviors.

1) Did the judge pay attention to the proceedings and participants?

- Did the judge pay attention when participants spoke?
- Did the judge watch for restless or napping jurors?
- Did the judge monitor the gallery?

2) Did the judge maintain control of the courtroom?

- Did the judge ensure the jury was attentive and that the gallery was quiet and respectful?
- Did the judge make sure attorneys behaved properly?
- Were disruptions or outbursts of emotion controlled?
- Were recesses called when emotions ran high?

3) Did the judge speak loudly and clearly?

- Were the judge's instructions and rulings clearly audible?
- Did the court microphones work effectively?

4) Did the judge make remarks that were understood and that made sense?

- Did the people involved in the case, including jurors, appear to understand the judge's remarks?
- Did the judge use many unfamiliar legal terms or did they speak in plain English?
- Did the judge take action to ensure that their remarks were understood?

5) Did the judge show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff or victim?

- Was the judge sensitive to the plaintiff's or victim's emotional situation?
- Did the judge display a negative attitude toward the plaintiff or victim?
- Did the judge treat the plaintiff or victim with respect and courtesy?
- During sentencing, did the judge tell the victim or their family about their right to present an impact statement?

- 6) Did the judge show understanding and consideration to the defendant?**
- Was the judge sensitive to the defendant's emotional situation?
 - Did the judge display a negative attitude toward the defendant?
 - Did the judge treat the defendant with respect and courtesy?
 - During sentencing, did the judge tell the defendant about their right to present a statement?
- 7) Did the judge explain the proceedings to participants?**
- Were the judge's explanations and decisions understandable or confusing?
 - Did the judge ensure that a defendant representing themselves understood the sequence of the proceedings?
- 8) Did the judge treat all participants professionally?**
- Did the judge remain firm, fair and objective?
 - Did the judge treat the attorneys with respect and as fellow professionals?
 - Did the judge speak to all participants directly and appropriately?
- 9) Did the judge favor either side? (yes / no)**
- Did the judge remain impartial in statements, attitude and actions?
 - Did the judge insult or undermine either side?
- 10) During sentencing, was the judge lenient, reasonable or severe?**
- Was the judge's explanation of the sentence reflected in the actual sentence?
 - In consideration of the judge's explanation of the law, did you think the sentence was appropriate to the circumstances of the case?

Judicial Evaluations

The Honorable Eric Aarseth Anchorage Superior Court

Appointed by Governor Murkowski to Anchorage Superior Court November 2005

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	49.0	Arrestment:	0	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	19	Change of Plea:	2	Pretrial Conference:	1
Positive Comments:	22	Civil Trial:	20	Sentencing:	0
Negative Comments:	6	Criminal Trial:	0	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	3	Trial Call:	2
		Jury Selection:	2	Other Hearings:	19
		Total Number of Evaluations:			49

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.78
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.65
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.53
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.74
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.63
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.70
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.74
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.63
Overall Rating:	3.67

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	49 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	0 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	0

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Aarseth:

Easy to hear and understand. Attentive. Tough children's case.

In a matter of fact way the judge made sure pro per participants were aware of specific timelines to comply with rulings as well as the results of non-compliance.

Firmly reminded both pro per parties that it would be better for their son if they tried working together and stop their bickering.

The judge allowed the pro per plaintiff to disrupt the proceedings over and over.

Difficult long term DV hearing. The judge's explanations were well-paced and could be understood even when the statute was read aloud.

The judge exhibited limited patience with the pro per defendant.

During the 35 minutes of opening statements, the judge did not once look up. Three jurors were busy looking through their purses, coat pockets, etc.

Rote reading of jury instructions.

Used humor in explanations, telling personal anecdotes while court was awaiting arrival of the bailiff. Courteous and helpful to all.

The judge listened intently to the facts presented and provided solutions for the parties to take into consideration.

Court starts on time and the judge is prepared!

Again, very patient with pro per participant.

When ruling on an objection, the judge demonstrated his familiarity with the case and law.

Patient, kept attorneys on track, easy to understand and gave good explanations.

I think this judge should show some patience with pro per participants.

A little more eye contact with the parties might help.

Great job dealing with parents that were having difficulty communicating regarding their visitations.

Went the extra mile to work very hard with each party to create solutions that benefited the children.

The Honorable Carl Bauman
Kenai Superior Court

Appointed by Governor Palin to Kenai Superior Court August 2007

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	59.3	Arraignment:	5	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	10	Change of Plea:	4	Pretrial Conference:	0
Positive Comments:	29	Civil Trial:	1	Sentencing:	6
Negative Comments:	4	Criminal Trial:	23	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	0	Trial Call:	0
		Jury Selection:	16	Other Hearings:	20
		Total Number of Evaluations:			75

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.75
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.76
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.77
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.82
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.64
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.64
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.73
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.59
Overall Rating:	3.71

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	75 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	6 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	6

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Bauman:

Very thorough. Easy to understand and follow his decisions.

Easy to follow the judge's explanation of Rule 11 and the Chaney Criteria.

Firm but still patient. Understandable and easy to hear.

Rightly impatient with one attorney after having to continually issue reminders to keep jury selection moving forward.

Compassionate with jurors who had challenges during this jury selection.

Clear explanations to the prospective jurors.

Well prepared for this sentencing. Clear explanations for sentence handed down.

Gave very clear and understandable instruction on how to weigh testimony of witnesses.

Frequently reminded witnesses to speak up. Made sure all participants could be heard.

Went through many arraignments today quickly and efficiently.

Accommodated requests for extensions, showed concern when dealing with third party custodian requests and moved expeditiously through these cases.

Great listener when dealing with bail issues.

Exhibited a great level of patience with a contentious pro per participants.

Gave clear direction of what the court expected of this defendant during his years of probation.

All around good job of keeping the witnesses on track and moving things along.

The judge wanted more information regarding an increase in bail. He went the extra mile by making a phone call and questioning both attorneys.

Judge was firm with attorneys and reminded them they need to stop procrastinating and focus on the case.

Very patient and methodical getting thorough this divorce hearing.

Very kind when asking this observer to leave the courtroom at the request of the plaintiff's attorney.

Did a great job of putting witness at ease.

The Honorable Jo-Ann Chung Anchorage District Court

Appointed by Governor Parnell to Anchorage District Court May 2011

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	86.5	Arraignment:	8	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	28	Change of Plea:	4	Pretrial Conference:	0
Positive Comments:	25	Civil Trial:	3	Sentencing:	0
Negative Comments:	10	Criminal Trial:	21	Small Claims:	4
		Domestic Violence:	0	Trial Call:	0
		Jury Selection:	9	Other Hearings:	25
		Total Number of Evaluations:			74

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.45
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.33
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.34
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.41
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.24
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.29
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.43
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.23
Overall Rating:	3.34

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	74 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	0 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	0

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Chung:

The judge was efficient in moving through many cases despite courtroom noise due to attorneys conferring with clients. Very understanding when dealing with a defendant having difficulty getting records from the Bethel court. The paperwork was needed for the defendant to continue her program and get her drivers license. The judge was able to get the paperwork faxed to the Anchorage court in 30 minutes. Great job. This is how the system should work.

Not a good day. The judge appeared rushed and short with participants. The judge didn't go into all the rights other judges go through. The gallery was extremely loud and no effort was made to quiet it down. Cell phones were going off and it was very distracting.

Showed patience for all and consideration for potential jurors.

Today the judge was easy to hear and understand. Clear in explanations when addressing the motions from attorneys.

An emotionally upset prospective juror was not immediately removed from the panel despite recently testifying in a sexual assault case in which she was the victim. Later in the jury selection process she broke down and was then excused.

The judge doesn't miss anything in her courtroom. Attentive to proceedings and things move at a good clip. Patient and observant.

Spoke very rapidly. I couldn't keep up.

Fair and efficient.

When reading her notes on instructions to the jury, she didn't seem to be fully prepared and corrected herself a lot.

The judge didn't just read off the defendant's rights, but looked at each of them and often used her own words. She addressed each person and made sure they understood their rights.

Explains rights in simple terms and makes sure defendants understand.

Direction to participants was very clear and concise, making sure people understood.

Rattled off charges, fees, agreements, penalties and rights in a rushed manner.

Took care of the cell phone problem in the courtroom quickly.

Very patient with pro per participants.

The Honorable Brian Clark Anchorage District Court

Appointed by Governor Murkowski to Anchorage District Court January 2003

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	67.0	Arraignment:	9	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	23	Change of Plea:	2	Pretrial Conference:	1
Positive Comments:	40	Civil Trial:	7	Sentencing:	3
Negative Comments:	7	Criminal Trial:	11	Small Claims:	1
		Domestic Violence:	0	Trial Call:	0
		Jury Selection:	2	Other Hearings:	24
		Total Number of Evaluations:			60

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.83
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.63
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.77
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.93
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.63
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.72
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.89
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.69
Overall Rating:	3.76

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	60 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	3 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	3

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Clark:

Very patient with a contentious defense attorney. Well prepared and thorough in making corrections to previously submitted records.

The judge's patience was severely tested by a pro per defendant who showed up with additional exhibits, tried to hang out at the bench after handing an exhibit to the in-court and engage in arguments rather than presenting facts. Bottom line: the judge was fair despite the pro per's behavior.

The judge's common sense prevailed when a finding of fact was made regarding a cleaning fee requested by one participant. Great job.

Explained the small claim proceedings well.

The judge's communication skills make his explanation of rights for each defendant easy to understand. Courteous and attentive. Deftly explains statutes and decisions.

Pays attention to details of each case.

Began these hearings by giving a friendly admonishment to the public defender for not meeting with clients prior to these hearings.

All around great job during these eviction hearings. Clear explanations, attentive, in control but patient.

Great explanations for each defendant and asks questions to make sure they understand their rights.

During this sentencing the defendant became very emotional, telling the judge she should not have been found guilty of a DUI. The judge calmly yet firmly explained she was not treated any differently than anyone else and how serious her offense was. While empathetic, the judge was very clear in all explanations.

Explained all rights and terms so the layperson could understand.

Crying children in an already packed courtroom makes for a courtroom in which one can't hear a thing.

Very interesting hearings as plaintiff's had attorneys and the defendants were pro per. Patiently explained the law and procedures. Great job.

I am very impressed with this judge. Polite to all and easy to understand all decisions. Great job.

Took extra time to explain the unfamiliar to first time defendants. Very organized, easy to hear, pleasant and articulate.

The Honorable Leslie Dickson
Anchorage District Court

Appointed by Governor Parnell to Anchorage District Court November 2012

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	28.0	Arraignment:	4	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	13	Change of Plea:	2	Pretrial Conference:	0
Positive Comments:	13	Civil Trial:	4	Sentencing:	0
Negative Comments:	9	Criminal Trial:	1	Small Claims:	3
		Domestic Violence:	0	Trial Call:	0
		Jury Selection:	2	Other Hearings:	8
		Total Number of Evaluations:			24

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.46
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.00
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.09
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.43
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.33
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.33
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.33
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.30
Overall Rating:	3.28

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	24 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	0 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	0

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Dickson:

The judge is a commanding presence in the courtroom.

Seems a bit lenient.

This is a new judge and seems very lenient in length of time given for paying of fines.

There were a couple of inappropriate outbursts from one defendant and the judge did not make any effort to control the situation.

Dealt calmly and decisively with a defendant in custody who refused to divulge his name and exhibited bizarre behavior.

Great explanation to defendants regarding self representation.

There were attorneys talking loudly in the back of the courtroom, so it was hard to hear the judge at times. The courtroom seemed sloppy casual in attitude and demeanor. The judge seemed to be on an equal level with the attorneys, not someone who was in charge of the courtroom. The judge called for a 20 minute recess and the jury pool was back in the courtroom on time, but the judge was absent for another half hour without explanation. Overall, I don't think the judge set a high enough standard for herself or the courtroom. I will return at a later date to see if there are improvements.

The judge offered all small claims participants the opportunity to pursue mediation prior to trial. Most accepted the offer.

Seemed harried and was difficult to hear.

Gave meaning of acronyms used. Efficient.

Court started 25 minutes late without explanation.

Rapid speech and not speaking into the microphone, so it was impossible to hear and understand what was being said. Did not stop attorney/client conversations that were loud enough to be distracting.

Did an excellent job explaining rights to the defendants.

Great job in arraignments today.

Special care taken during a language interpreter assisted case.

Really had no control over a defendant that continued to talk over her during this hearing.

Did not have appropriate information regarding the defendant's claim.

The Honorable Catherine Easter

Anchorage Superior Court

Appointed by Governor Palin to Anchorage District Court June 2008
 Appointed by Governor Parnell to Anchorage Superior Court March 2012

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	49.6	Arrestment:	0	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	17	Change of Plea:	0	Pretrial Conference:	1
Positive Comments:	24	Civil Trial:	11	Sentencing:	0
Negative Comments:	0	Criminal Trial:	0	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	5	Trial Call:	0
		Jury Selection:	0	Other Hearings:	26
		Total Number of Evaluations:			43

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.98
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.80
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.74
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.79
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.68
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.71
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.92
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.81
Overall Rating:	3.80

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	43 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	0 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	0

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Easter:

Allowed maximum latitude for both parties to develop a mutually acceptable custody solution.

The judge steadfastly defended the limited scope of this evidentiary hearing, thus eliminating confusion and unnecessary disagreement.

The judge made it clear to both pro per parties that finger pointing and interruptions between them would not be tolerated. When their teenage child was called as a witness, the judge asked the questions. Great job with a very ugly case.

Pleasant and thorough. Great observation.

Made tactful corrections when the plaintiff's attorney neglected to ask to approach more than once. When attorneys began confabbing at their tables, the judge asked them to approach and conferred with them. Wonderful observation.

Pleasant to all. Easy to hear and understand.

Listens intently. Does not allow interruptions. Firm about protecting the best interests of the child. Takes extra time to encourage each person to move toward clarity, agreement and mutual acceptance. Patiently repeats as often as needed. Great job.

Explained late start, clarified issues that were possible points of disagreement and congratulated one party on how much work had been done to improve parenting skills.

Showed compassion and a strong desire for the best outcome for the parents and children involved.

Very generous with praise to those who were doing well in the Wellness Court. How could one not want to do well with such great support?

Doubled-checked all paperwork. Cordial and patient to all participants.

The judge demonstrated great patience and a prudent course of action for the introduction of evidence which the attorney was unprepared to provide.

Gave great kudos to both parents for working so hard to come to an agreement for the best interest of their child.

The judge expertly managed to keep proceedings on track and was patient with pro per participants.

Very much in control. Did not accept lame excuses from attorneys and held them to prior timelines.

The Honorable William Estelle Palmer District Court

Appointed by Governor Murkowski to Palmer District Court June 2003

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	89.6	Arraignment:	9	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	11	Change of Plea:	6	Pretrial Conference:	2
Positive Comments:	45	Civil Trial:	3	Sentencing:	0
Negative Comments:	7	Criminal Trial:	5	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	14	Trial Call:	3
		Jury Selection:	7	Other Hearings:	34
		Total Number of Evaluations:			83

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.60
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.42
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.30
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.57
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.53
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.49
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.51
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.49
Overall Rating:	
	3.49

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	83 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	0 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	0

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Estelle:

The judge's behavior and attitude seem to create a calm and respectful courtroom.

During voir dire, the judge's explanation of peremptory challenges was straightforward and easy to understand.

Slow moving through these arraignments. Very difficult to hear the judge. Explanations are hard to understand.

Great job explaining terms and process to pro per parties. Listens attentively and is clear and easy to understand.

Despite diametrically opposing views of the facts on both sides, the judge found his way through the hotly contested rhetoric to a wise conclusion.

The judge handled an emotional witness superbly. Showed great people skills.

The judge seemed to know more about the case than the attorneys and worked towards a settlement.

Pensive, thoughtful judge with excellent skills in putting participants at ease during this DV hearing.

Repeated cell phone noises coming from the gallery. An attorney finally asked the judge to have the cell phones shut off.

Not sure how the judge kept so calm with one participant's continued outbursts.

Empathetic, takes great care in making sure each defendant knows exactly what is going on. Excellent with a minor, encouraging them to do better with their life.

Clear explanation of how a non-jury trial works. Patient with the process of working through an interpreter.

The judge explained the procedure for these evictions cases while avoiding giving legal advice to either side.

Total chaos in the courtroom. Judge made one attempt to quiet the galley but it was not effective.

The judge supported his findings with detailed step-by-step logic. Very easy for a layperson to follow.

The judge personalized each case and offered encouragement, especially to young defendants.

The Honorable Andrew Guidi Anchorage Superior Court

Appointed by Governor Parnell to Anchorage Superior Court July 2010

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	65.3	Arraignment:	0	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	25	Change of Plea:	0	Pretrial Conference:	1
Positive Comments:	34	Civil Trial:	20	Sentencing:	0
Negative Comments:	5	Criminal Trial:	4	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	3	Trial Call:	0
		Jury Selection:	1	Other Hearings:	36
		Total Number of Evaluations:			65

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.68
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.44
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.11
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.58
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.46
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.45
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.60
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.42
Overall Rating:	3.47

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	64 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	1 evaluation.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	0 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	0

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Guidi:

The judge showed concern and empathy for both parents as only one was going to be awarded primary custody. The child was always his main concern. Wonderful job.

It felt as though the judge assisted the pro per defendant more than the pro per plaintiff in this custody dispute for summer visitation.

The judge listened carefully to each person that spoke concerning this placement case and was calm and gentle when speaking to the minor child. Great job.

The judge encouraged an agreement and one was finally reached. Fairness and good communication were key to the settlement.

Made an effort to ensure decisions and directions were clearly understood during this Child In Need of Aid case.

Repeatedly advised an obstinate pro se party not to have all witnesses participate in an upcoming hearing since there would be insufficient time to hear them all. He did this with firm but kind words.

Congratulatory and showed genuine happiness for a newly formed family. Very touching.

The judge clearly understood the dynamics between the two parents and he tried to lead them to a neutral area and work for what was best for the children.

During this long DV hearing, the judge's calm voice allowed the participants to discuss their grievances in a civil manner. He kept the testimony on track.

The judge needs to speak into the microphone as he is difficult to hear.

On at least two occasions the judge directed a wandering attorney to return to the podium area. The judge was clearly engaged, asking several clarifying questions regarding evidence presented.

Very emotional and difficult hearing involving custody and a false DV accusation. The judge was firm, fair and thorough.

Very soft spoken. Even attorneys had to ask him to repeat what he was saying. The judge didn't look at witnesses when they were testifying.

Courteous and cooperative with the attorneys in the struggle to obtain a video transcript of previous testimony to show to a witness.

Guiding without inhibiting the process, the judge allowed witnesses and counsel to freely express their thoughts and opinions in a meaningful way.

The Honorable J. Patrick Hanley
Anchorage District Court

Appointed by Governor Murkowski to Anchorage District Court January 2005

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	14.3	Arraignment:	0	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	10	Change of Plea:	2	Pretrial Conference:	1
Positive Comments:	8	Civil Trial:	2	Sentencing:	0
Negative Comments:	2	Criminal Trial:	0	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	0	Trial Call:	0
		Jury Selection:	0	Other Hearings:	7
		Total Number of Evaluations:			12

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.67
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.67
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.75
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.91
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.71
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.67
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	4.00
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.58
Overall Rating:	
	3.74

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	12 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	0 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	0

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Hanley:

Professional and polite.

Attentive, patient and fair.

It was odd that the judge allowed one juror to leave his baseball hat on throughout the proceedings, despite a requirement posted on the courtroom door prohibiting such practice.

Carefully explained these change of plea agreements using a vocabulary that was easily understood.

Communicates well with defendants. I think that helps keep everyone calm and courteous during these Jail Court hearings.

Always a pleasure to observe this judge.

The judge ruled on one small claims case and efficiently directed other cases to mediation or other judges.

This judge has an obvious cooperative relationship with attorneys.

On time, prepared and easy to understand.

The Honorable Gregory Heath Palmer Superior Court

Appointed by Governor Murkowski to Palmer District Court November 2003
Appointed by Governor Palin to Palmer Superior Court July 2009

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	34.7	Arraignment:	8	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	7	Change of Plea:	2	Pretrial Conference:	1
Positive Comments:	21	Civil Trial:	6	Sentencing:	1
Negative Comments:	2	Criminal Trial:	6	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	0	Trial Call:	1
		Jury Selection:	0	Other Hearings:	11
		Total Number of Evaluations:			36

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.92
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.70
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.72
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.83
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.76
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.79
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.56
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.80
	Overall Rating: 3.76

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	36 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	1 evaluation.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	1

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Heath:

Several in-custody defendants were pointing, whispering and laughing at individuals sitting in the gallery. This behavior seemed both inappropriate and disrespectful to the court.

Friendly and helpful to program participants. Firm when necessary. Encouraging to all.

Relaxed demeanor. Paid close attention to details when working to protect the rights of a minor.

The judge showed excellent skills in the sometimes mind-numbing procedure of word-smithing the jury instructions.

Moved deliberately and confidently through arraignments, allowing one non-custody case to be heard first for the parties' convenience.

Urged parties to keep things moving forward and involved in asking questions.

Excellent job keeping the hearing moving forward. Controlled attorneys, tactful and firm and great explanations of decisions.

Very good with both per per participants.

Kept a massive amount of paperwork in order, spoke to each defendant and was clear and concise with rulings and decisions. Great multi tasking skills.

Stern with those participants who are not complying with their programs and very encouraging to those that are.

Very patient with a couple of verbose in-custody defendants.

The judge showed excellent negotiating skills when dealing with state agencies in this CINA case.

Takes time to explain his logic and decisions thoroughly.

Firmly but tactfully lets attorneys know that the court expects deadlines of further motions to be met.

The judge had to warn both parties several times to settle down during this very emotional and acrimonious divorce trial.

Great job explaining to all defendants their bail conditions and consequences if the conditions were not met.

Looks for solutions that might work for everyone. Encouraging to those making positive life changes.

The Honorable Jennifer Henderson Anchorage District Court

Appointed by Governor Parnell to Anchorage District Court November 2012

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	33.0	Arraignment:	0	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	14	Change of Plea:	0	Pretrial Conference:	1
Positive Comments:	11	Civil Trial:	2	Sentencing:	0
Negative Comments:	3	Criminal Trial:	4	Small Claims:	2
		Domestic Violence:	0	Trial Call:	0
		Jury Selection:	0	Other Hearings:	15
		Total Number of Evaluations:			24

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.63
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.33
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.33
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.46
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.30
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.41
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.50
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.27
Overall Rating:	3.40

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	24 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	0 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	0

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Henderson:

Gave each side ample opportunity to have their say during these eviction hearings.

Can be difficult to hear with all the background noise during these hearings.

Very thorough, patient and firm. The judge was able to convey displeasure with one party for not providing information without being sarcastic or condescending.

Reasonable and strict with repeatedly non-compliant pro per participant.

The judge exercised great patience with two pro per parties who had failed to share evidence in the discovery process and were unprepared for court.

The judge is a bright, personable and self-assured new jurist. More importantly, she has the good sense to acknowledge her inexperience and conduct research before ruling.

Rules with polite firmness.

Encouraged all to take advantage of the free mediation service to try to resolve issues without going to trial.

Prompt, clear, pleasant and decisive.

Today the judge proved that she could be both firm and compassionate.

The judgment for the defendant in this small claims cases seemed lenient.

The most sincerely polite judge I have observed.

The judge clearly defined the legal requirements and the court's expectations.

The Honorable Charles Huguelet Kenai Superior Court

Appointed by Governor Murkowski to Kenai Superior Court September 2003

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	27.2	Arraignment:	2	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	7	Change of Plea:	1	Pretrial Conference:	0
Positive Comments:	13	Civil Trial:	7	Sentencing:	1
Negative Comments:	4	Criminal Trial:	7	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	2	Trial Call:	0
		Jury Selection:	1	Other Hearings:	17
		Total Number of Evaluations:			38

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.55
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.63
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.62
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.57
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.44
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.41
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.44
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.37
Overall Rating:	3.50

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	38 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	1 evaluation.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	1

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Huguelet:

Can't hear the attorneys or the judge very well.

Again, difficult to hear the judge or any participants in the Kenai courtrooms.

Thorough and easy to understand.

Patient and thorough during this change of plea.

Learned a lot about aggravators during this sentencing. Interesting and educational.

Great when dealing with young inexperienced parents and their custody agreement.

A smooth running courtroom during these hearings.

Slightly impatient with a couple of attorneys during these hearings and rightfully so.

Gave great suggestions to this couple that would benefit their child.

The judge asked for explanation of the acronyms used by attorneys.

Asked many question, listened carefully to all responses and respectful and firm with both pro per parties.

Very patient with both pro per parties in a contentious hearing. Worked hard to get parties to some type of agreement.

Very attentive and asked an attorney to rephrase confusing questions so the witness could better respond.

Rightfully agitated with paperwork not being taken care of in order to have a fair hearing.

Great job with a very aggressive attorney.

The Honorable Sharon Illsley
Kenai District Court

Appointed by Governor Palin to Kenai District Court June 2007

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	65.1	Arraignment:	13	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	8	Change of Plea:	11	Pretrial Conference:	2
Positive Comments:	20	Civil Trial:	2	Sentencing:	0
Negative Comments:	14	Criminal Trial:	29	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	1	Trial Call:	0
		Jury Selection:	6	Other Hearings:	24
		Total Number of Evaluations:			88

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.58
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.35
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.29
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.49
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.38
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.37
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.54
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.31
Overall Rating:	3.41

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	88 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	0 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	0

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Illsley:

Speaks too quietly and too quickly. Hard to follow.

No control over either attorney during this arraignment. Confusing discussions regarding bails and court dates for trials. Chaotic.

Again, lots of acronyms used without explanation of their meanings.

When the judge explained what rights the defendant was giving up during this change of plea, the defendant didn't understand and the judge patiently and thoroughly explained again. Great job.

Handled an elderly defendant with kindness, a young offender with concern and was thorough and professional.

Showed care and concern for witness during this evidentiary hearing.

Made sure defendant knew her rights during this change of plea. Showed compassion and encouragement. Wonderful job.

Gave great advice to a young defendant on how to stay out of further trouble. Firm and fair.

Active in questioning, listening and explaining to defendants during these hearings.

Carefully and thoroughly explained rights, process and consequences during these Change of Pleas.

Again, very difficult to hear in the courtroom.

Very noisy and chaotic.

Fully and calmly explained the ramifications of non-compliance with court orders.

Asked that a crying baby and mother to please step into the hallway.

Even though it is case after case, the judge speaks to each defendant personally.

Seemed more interested in shuffling paperwork than listening to a witness.

It was very, very difficult to hear during this jury selection.

Patient and firm with an irritated witness.

The swaying back and forth at the bench is so distracting.

Careful to maintain order in this emotional remand proceeding.

The Honorable Kari Kristiansen Palmer Superior Court

Appointed by Governor Murkowski to Palmer Superior Court November 2006

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	66.6	Arraignment:	2	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	7	Change of Plea:	3	Pretrial Conference:	0
Positive Comments:	27	Civil Trial:	7	Sentencing:	1
Negative Comments:	2	Criminal Trial:	22	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	0	Trial Call:	2
		Jury Selection:	2	Other Hearings:	36
		Total Number of Evaluations:			75

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.91
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.85
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.73
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.75
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.61
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.65
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.69
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.75
Overall Rating:	3.74

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	75 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	1 evaluation.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	1

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Kristiansen:

The judge was very professional, speaking clearly and concisely. The defendant was pro se and the judge asked relevant questions regarding the case. Very fair to both sides during this child custody case. Great job.

Encouraged parties to work up a safety plan and very receptive to mediation in this ITMO case.

Great job dealing with a difficult CINA issue.

Excellent resolution and negotiation skills.

Both sides were throwing case law out to the judge who was very fluent with points of law and rules of evidence. Handled it with patience and objectivity.

Thoughtful, deliberative but ultimately decisive.

Patient and thorough with pro per defendant. Great job.

Great job with change of pleas. Easy to follow and understand the decisions made by the judge.

Very professional with control of this children's case. It was wonderful to observe.

Great patience and understandable explanation of mediation process provided to participants for whom English is their second language.

Very understandable explanation of why bail was revoked in this case. Interesting and educational.

When the attorneys began squabbling, the judge immediately took control. Very effective in keeping things moving forward.

First time I have observed a judge allowing jurors to ask questions once the attorneys have agreed to the questions. Interesting.

The judge used her own words (rather than boiler plate) when explaining trial and appeal rights to the defendant – effective.

Concise, polite and straight forward during these hearings.

The judge had to deal with numerous objections by both attorneys and did so quickly, providing thorough explanations when needed.

Engaged, attentive, asked questions to clarify questions and checked and rechecked details with both attorneys to be better prepared for ruling.

Gave detailed references to previous case law when outlining her sentencing decision.

The Honorable Erin Marston Anchorage Superior Court

Appointed by Governor Parnell to Anchorage Superior Court September 2012

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	21.9	Arraignment:	0	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	13	Change of Plea:	0	Pretrial Conference:	1
Positive Comments:	10	Civil Trial:	5	Sentencing:	0
Negative Comments:	2	Criminal Trial:	1	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	2	Trial Call:	0
		Jury Selection:	3	Other Hearings:	13
		Total Number of Evaluations:			25

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.64
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.27
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.30
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.45
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.37
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.37
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.39
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.32
Overall Rating:	3.39

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	25 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	0 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	0

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Marston:

The judge listened carefully to oral arguments by both attorneys. Asked for clarifications and made a point of summarizing the points made.

The judge allowed disputing parties to peaceably state their respective cases without undue interference.

Stayed focused and attentive even with both parties on the telephone.

This was a CINA case conducted over the telephone. Great pacing and use of a lay vocabulary by the judge.

The judge listened to the advice of all parties involved in the CINA case. Very impressive and insightful ruling.

Controlled a lively discussion between attorneys.

This judge has a habit of covering his mouth with his hand, making it hard to understand what is being said.

The judge seemed better versed on the provisions of contract case law than the attorneys.

Very good at explaining the legal meaning of the parent's agreement and the court's intention and guidelines regarding the care of the child.

Explained why I was not able to remain in the courtroom. Courteous and professional.

Soft spoken.

Nothing got by this judge during the DV hearing. Great job.

The Honorable Patrick McKay Anchorage Superior Court

Appointed by Governor Murkowski to Anchorage Superior Court November 2005

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	57.1	Arraignment:	0	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	19	Change of Plea:	0	Pretrial Conference:	0
Positive Comments:	20	Civil Trial:	21	Sentencing:	0
Negative Comments:	5	Criminal Trial:	0	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	4	Trial Call:	0
		Jury Selection:	5	Other Hearings:	14
		Total Number of Evaluations:			44

Did the judge . . .

(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)

. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.89
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.61
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.55
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.71
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.66
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.59
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.76
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.46
Overall Rating:	3.65

Did the judge appear to favor either side?

Did not favor either side: 44 evaluations.
 Favored the defense: 0 evaluations.
 Favored the prosecution: 0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .

Lenient: 0 evaluations.
 Reasonable: 0 evaluations.
 Severe: 0 evaluations.
 Total Sentencings: 0

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge McKay:

The judge offered reasonable suggestions and considered the emotional status of these parents during this divorce proceedings. Great job.

The judge seemed to be rather short in temperament when addressing attorneys today.

The judge had a very difficult situation to deal with in this hearing as there were at least a dozen attorneys and advocates circling throughout the proceedings. The judge paid close attention to all the parties involved and I am sure this child in need will get the fairest ruling possible.

Worked well with the attorneys when going over jury instructions.

Rightfully frustrated with plaintiff's attorney for not having reviewed the jury instructions before this morning.

Quickly shut down irrelevant arguments.

Well prepared for these oral arguments. Encouraged additional possibilities of settlement. Nice sense of humor.

This judge conducts a very relaxed, friendly but respectful courtroom.

Using appropriate humor, the judge was quickly able to get the witness to relax.

Parties were given time to try to resolve their custody issues before proceeding to trial. Clearly engaged in the process. Great job.

Very respectful of pro per participant. Asked clarifying questions. Great to observe.

The judge was so patient with the pro per plaintiff's ramblings. Tried frequently to keep things focused and moving forward.

Cognizant of the emotions of both parents and their inability to work together. Corrected both when they referred to "my child" and told them to use "our child". Great job.

The judge admonished the complainant for failing to let the child see the father before transferring out with the military. Very engaged in the hearing.

Patient and offered resources to both parties during this long term DV hearing.

Excellent job with pro per parties. Can't believe how patient this judge is when dealing with so many family cases that are pro per.

The Honorable Gregory Miller Anchorage Superior Court

Appointed by Governor Parnell to Anchorage Superior Court January 2011

Evaluations	Case Types
Evaluation Hours: 138.6	Arraignment: 4 Pre-indictment Hearing: 0
No. of Observers: 29	Change of Plea: 8 Pretrial Conference: 3
Positive Comments: 53	Civil Trial: 7 Sentencing: 2
Negative Comments: 2	Criminal Trial: 30 Small Claims: 0
	Domestic Violence: 6 Trial Call: 0
	Jury Selection: 8 Other Hearings: 37
	Total Number of Evaluations: 105

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.67
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.61
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.46
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.56
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.51
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.55
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.73
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.42
Overall Rating:	3.56

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	105 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	2 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	2

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Miller:

Easy to hear and understand. Dismissed the jury rather than keep them in court while sorting out differences between the attorneys. Did not seem rushed to move quickly through the trial.

The judge moved efficiently through many cases during my observation. There were many disruptions, but if I were a defendant, I would have felt like the judge heard my case thoroughly.

Made firm statements to defendants but also showed understanding and empathy. Polite and professional with his interactions.

The judge makes the court experience very personal. Great explanations to two victims ready to give statements when the accused changed his plea. Judge kept order, explained the law to both victims and the lack of discretion allowed by the judge. Great learning experience for me.

Uses laymen language. I didn't feel like he was reading from a script.

Soft spoken and treats each case with courtesy and careful attention. Very thorough in making sure the defendants understood all the particulars of their cases.

The judge was personable, kind, humorous and friendly with prospective jurors.

Very patient with both attorneys and gave very clear explanations for decision regarding a mistrial motion.

Defendant was a no-show for this adjudication and the judge swiftly issued a bench warrant.

The judge ran a calm, orderly courtroom. Personal with each defendant with clarity in reading their rights.

Careful and thorough explanation of the duties and responsibilities of a third-party custodian.

Carefully went over rights with each defendant and explained what they would be giving up with their change of plea. Gave each defendant a chance to address the court.

A full, busy courtroom. The judge reminded all parties to be a bit quieter.

The judge attentively and patiently listened to both rambling attorneys.

The judge's concern for the needs of both parents and their child was readily apparent.

The Honorable Anna Moran Kenai Superior Court

Appointed by Governor Palin to Kenai Superior Court March 2007

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	49.3	Arraignment:	7	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	9	Change of Plea:	10	Pretrial Conference:	0
Positive Comments:	24	Civil Trial:	11	Sentencing:	5
Negative Comments:	3	Criminal Trial:	3	Small Claims:	1
		Domestic Violence:	1	Trial Call:	1
		Jury Selection:	2	Other Hearings:	30
		Total Number of Evaluations:			71

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.80
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.57
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.79
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.68
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.58
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.61
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.60
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.51
Overall Rating:	3.64

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	71 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	5 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	5

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Moran:

Very thorough in explanations.

The judge seems to run a very unbiased court proceeding during this divorce hearing.

Great explanation of the rights the defendant was giving up by pleading guilty.

The judge was concerned about placing the defendant with the mother, but explained all the consequences if the defendant disobeyed any of the rules regarding electronic monitoring during this bail hearing.

Very fair and thorough during this DV hearing.

Showed compassion to this youthful offender.

Impressive job at trying to arrange a mutually agreeable custody arrangement with these pro per participants.

Great job mediating a dispute between parents during this custody hearing.

A wonderful job dealing with parents who just can't come to any kind of agreement on anything. Patient and thorough.

Stressed the need for these parents to get on the same page by trying to work together. Great job.

Gave defendant advice and urged him to use his time in incarceration wisely. Explained reasoning for sentence and urged this young defendant to turn his life around.

Well prepared and knew the backstory of this case.

The judge spent time making sure the microphones in the courtroom worked properly, there were enough chairs for all potential jurors, and whether people in the jury box could read the witness list before the jury pool came into the courtroom. Well prepared.

The judge asked that the crying baby be removed. Great job.

Very clear on admission of evidence procedures.

Very attentive to long, complicated evidence heard during my observation.

The judge went the extra mile during this divorce trial by assisting the attorney with itemizing property. Very patient.

Close attention paid and explanations given many times during this property settlement.

The Honorable William Morse Anchorage Superior Court

Appointed by Governor Knowles to Anchorage Superior Court February 2002

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	55.3	Arraignment:	0	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	22	Change of Plea:	0	Pretrial Conference:	0
Positive Comments:	23	Civil Trial:	19	Sentencing:	0
Negative Comments:	10	Criminal Trial:	5	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	0	Trial Call:	0
		Jury Selection:	11	Other Hearings:	17
		Total Number of Evaluations:			52

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.67
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.61
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.52
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.72
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.53
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.53
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.70
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.71
Overall Rating:	3.62

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	51 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	1 evaluation.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	0 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	0

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Morse:

During this observation it appeared to me the judge showed contempt and frustration towards a witness who had a language barrier issue.

Politely stopped interruptions by parties during heated proceedings. Used impressive skill in helping the parties agree to summer custody arrangements and took time to calmly figure out child support adjustments.

The judge exhibited extraordinary patience with a pro per plaintiff who made numerous derogatory, unsupported statements about the defendant's attorney.

Clarified witness testimony on the timeline when unclear, considered objections carefully and gave understandable decisions.

Easily heard, asked questions when clarification was need and very attentive.

The judge spoke quietly to the angry defendant in the witness box, which worked to calm the defendant. Very patient even with an emotional, inappropriate outburst, using negotiating skills to keep all on track. Both pro per parties were given the judge's full attention and the judge worked diligently to ensure the best outcome for the minor child involved. Great job.

Very patient when letting one pro per vent but not to the point of losing control. Asked lots of clarifying questions of both pro per participants. Very good.

Moved the questioning along when it became repetitive.

Often mumbles and is hard to understand.

Seems very bored with jury selection. Chair pushed back and looking at ceiling.

Seemed rather impatient with attorneys. Very difficult to hear the judge.

Used calm reasoning to come to a solution with one parent during a contentious custody hearing.

The judge was not happy with either party. Plaintiff had failed to show a number of times and the defendant kept interrupting. The judge kept things focused and worked out a visitation amenable to both parties.

Spoke to defendant in plain language. Worked so hard to convince the defendant that life can be better and a change is needed. This was a different side of this judge than I have seen in previous observations.

The Honorable Gregory Motyka Anchorage District Court

Appointed by Governor Hickel to Anchorage District Court July 1991

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	58.6	Arraignment:	1	Pre-indictment Hearing:	3
No. of Observers:	22	Change of Plea:	11	Pretrial Conference:	3
Positive Comments:	32	Civil Trial:	0	Sentencing:	0
Negative Comments:	7	Criminal Trial:	7	Small Claims:	1
		Domestic Violence:	0	Trial Call:	1
		Jury Selection:	2	Other Hearings:	19
		Total Number of Evaluations:			48

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.65
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.50
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.58
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.55
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.37
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.33
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.49
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.38
Overall Rating:	3.48

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	48 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	0 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	0

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Motyka:

Words that describe this judge: prudence, patience, efficient.

Explained decisions speaking clearly and reasonably. Patient and firm with defendant's attorney who was very long winded during closing.

Communicates very well with all in the courtroom. Good sense of humor. Explains consequences thoroughly. Requested crying baby be removed from the courtroom. Nice job.

The judge maintained control, moved the proceeding along and gave clear and courteous responses and instructions to all participants.

Used appropriate humor, listened carefully to each case and explained his decisions thoroughly.

No nonsense judge. Great control of a very busy courtroom. Frequently asked about victim notification. Carefully considered the impact on family and the victim if defendants were allowed more lenient monitoring.

The judge runs a cordial and efficient courtroom.

Carefully explained to each defendant what rights they would be giving up by changing their plea to no contest. Easy to hear and understand.

Great explanation of the mediation service that is available.

Lots of disruptive conversations between various attorneys during these hearings.

Shows appropriate humor. Well-spoken with great explanations.

During these change of pleas the judge confirmed each defendant understood their waiver of rights and gave each defendant the opportunity to speak.

These pre-trial conferences were very confusing. Lots of interruptions and side conversations.

Very easily heard and uses language that is easily understood.

Great explanation of the difference between "absolute certainty" and "certainty beyond a reasonable doubt".

The judge showed amazing control by remaining stoic during the testimony of a very unique and amusing witness.

The judge demonstrated extraordinary patience in dealing with three public property trespass defendants who had little respect for the court's time.

The Honorable Paul Olson

Anchorage Superior Court

Appointed by Governor Parnell to Anchorage District Court January 2010
 Appointed by Governor Parnell to Anchorage Superior Court March 2012

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	57.5	Arrestment:	0	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	19	Change of Plea:	1	Pretrial Conference:	0
Positive Comments:	20	Civil Trial:	19	Sentencing:	0
Negative Comments:	11	Criminal Trial:	4	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	1	Trial Call:	0
		Jury Selection:	0	Other Hearings:	21
		Total Number of Evaluations:			46

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.74
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.43
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.35
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.52
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.68
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.68
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.64
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.53
	Overall Rating: 3.57

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	46 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	0 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	0

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Olson:

The judge came into the courtroom prepared and moved this hearing along. He provided clear instructions and made sure each defendant understood everything that was said.

Very hard to hear the judge. Spoke rapidly and mumbled.

Worked cooperatively with both parties during this divorce settlement.

The judge clearly did not want to recuse himself and pass this complicated case on to another judge. He apologized to all for the delays that would come with his recusal.

Just can't understand much of what the judge is saying. Mumbles and speaks softly.

The judge went to great lengths to make sure both parties understood the agreements regarding custody.

Patient with defense attorney who had to be reminded over and over not to lead the witness.

Obviously well prepared for this trial.

Relaxed but clearly in charge, not letting attorneys get away with anything.

Gave utmost deference to the needs of child. Spoke patiently to one party about substance abuse problems and encouraged her to get counseling. Explained his order very well.

In day four of a bifurcated divorce trial with no child custody issues at stake and \$50,000 in legal fees already incurred, the judge questioned why the attorneys were still arguing about how to divvy up pots and pans.

The plaintiff's attorney gave rambling statements and changed topics before completing a sentence. The fact that the judge could figure out what was being said gave new meaning to "paying attention" during this proceeding.

Properly scolded both parties for bringing young children to the courtroom. Moreover, he explained the long term damage it could cause these children. Great job.

Unprepared. Had to leave the bench to search for exhibits which he had but had not brought to the courtroom.

Understanding, gentle but also firm with both parties.

Seemed very impatient with the attorneys.

The Honorable Frank Pfiffner Anchorage Superior Court

Appointed by Governor Parnell to Anchorage Superior Court October 2009

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	68.0	Arraignment:	0	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	26	Change of Plea:	0	Pretrial Conference:	0
Positive Comments:	20	Civil Trial:	39	Sentencing:	0
Negative Comments:	17	Criminal Trial:	0	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	0	Trial Call:	0
		Jury Selection:	4	Other Hearings:	14
		Total Number of Evaluations:			57

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.37
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.20
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.04
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.21
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.30
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.31
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.31
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.16
Overall Rating:	3.24

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	55 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	2 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	0 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	0

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Pfiffner:

The judge's constant tapping of his fingers on the bench was very distracting. It almost looked as though the judge was nodding off a couple of times.

Today the judge exhibited patience and tact with a frustrating witness.

Showed obvious frustration towards plaintiff and attorney. Asked rather condescending questions of the plaintiff.

Slowly and patiently worked with the pro per plaintiff during this custody hearing.

At the start of the proceedings the judge made reference to some of his personal problems the night before. I thought this was unprofessional and unnecessary.

The pro per plaintiff looked to be a handful, but the judge kept things moving and on track.

Made awesome statements about how the parties disdain for each other was making the child suffer.

The judge came into the courtroom mumbling apologies for being late. He spoke about the trial, but I couldn't understand what was being said. I wouldn't want to have been a participant in this case with this judge.

The judge was very impatient with the female plaintiff.

Mumbles and is barely audible. Rarely looks at anyone in the courtroom.

Very irritated and sharp with the attorneys. Not a pleasant observation.

Attorneys argued frequently with themselves and the judge. It seemed like a courtroom out of control. The judge seemed focused on the need to wrap up the case but could not control the attorneys.

Very cranky and not in control of the attorneys.

Went to great lengths to understand the needs of the complainant.

Asked poignant questions that seemed to help clarify murky testimony relating to personal and business expenses. Very engaged in the proceedings.

A child in the courtroom was distracting.

The judge discussed with attorneys an incident reported by another juror which may impact the full jury. Went to great lengths to resolve the situation.

The Honorable Stephanie Rhoades Anchorage District Court

Appointed by Governor Hickel to Anchorage District Court July 1992

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	80.7	Arraignment:	3	Pre-indictment Hearing:	1
No. of Observers:	24	Change of Plea:	2	Pretrial Conference:	5
Positive Comments:	56	Civil Trial:	5	Sentencing:	0
Negative Comments:	9	Criminal Trial:	13	Small Claims:	4
		Domestic Violence:	0	Trial Call:	2
		Jury Selection:	1	Other Hearings:	42
		Total Number of Evaluations:			78

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.76
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.73
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.71
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.71
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.48
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.48
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.72
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.54
Overall Rating:	3.64

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	78 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	0 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	0

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Rhoades:

The judge moves right along in her courtroom. Appropriate use of humor when needed. Very personal with each case. Firm when necessary and congratulatory when defendant completed their course of action.

I was impressed that the judge explained the rights each defendant was giving up without notes and looked at each person when speaking. Great job.

When the judge was informed about serious delays in forwarding evidence during the discovery process in several cases, she quickly developed a sure-fire remedy.

Direct, bordering on abrupt from time to time, but necessary to make things clear and maintain control. Drills down well to underlying issues.

Pragmatic, efficient and down to business. Appropriate humor. Well organized.

The judge invited the dismissed juror to contact her regarding the verdict and any comments the dismissed juror may have. Kudos.

It was a pleasure to observe this small claims case. The courtroom was kept under control. The judge showed an appropriate sense of humor and asked jurors if they needed a break throughout my observation.

The judge was very familiar with each case and reviewed them for the court participants. Praised those doing well, personable but stern when needed.

I continue to be impressed with this judge's very personal relationships with those that have been seen over time in the special court program.

Very decisive and clear with her decisions. Runs a tight ship.

The judge has an upbeat therapeutic versus punitive courtroom. Healing seems to be the goal of all and to get these participants on their feet and a functional member of society. Awesome.

Handled an outburst from an in-custody defendant professionally and swiftly.

Gave a defendant a great lecture on alcohol issues and required him to appear in her court every month until treatment was completed.

Looked bored, rifled through folders and a ten minute break turned into twenty minutes.

Keeps attorneys on their toes. Doesn't suffer fools gladly.

The Honorable Mark Rindner Anchorage Superior Court

Appointed by Governor Knowles to Anchorage Superior Court October 2000

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	48.6	Arraignment:	0	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	20	Change of Plea:	0	Pretrial Conference:	0
Positive Comments:	23	Civil Trial:	8	Sentencing:	0
Negative Comments:	2	Criminal Trial:	0	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	3	Trial Call:	0
		Jury Selection:	3	Other Hearings:	29
		Total Number of Evaluations:			43

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.83
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.71
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.73
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.80
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.62
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.57
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.74
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.63
Overall Rating:	
	3.70

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	43 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	0 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	0

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Rindner:

The judge indicated that the defendant's repeated failure to appear at a previous hearing warranted payment of plaintiff's attorney fees for that hearing.

The judge scolded one parent for bringing the teenage children to court during this custody hearing. He let both parties know he was very concerned about the future of the children. Great job.

The judge forged a temporary child custody arrangement where none seemed possible at the start of this hearing.

I observed this judge hearing four very diverse cases. The judge was fully aware of the facts of each case and the previous findings and history. Attentive, courteous and respectful to both sides in all cases.

Educational and interesting to watch the judge outline a clear, concise and common sense method for these parents to better deal with all the issues involving their children during this ongoing custody case.

Very attentive and caring when dealing with this custody case.

The judge made sure the conditions of visitation were understood by all parties, having both sides repeat the conditions. Encouraged both parties to work at a settlement before trial.

Not sure how the judge kept his patience with the pro per plaintiff who evaded questions from both the judge and attorney. The judge rephrased questions, often and in layman's language, but the plaintiff still pretended not to understand. Great job.

Patient and calm while working with the parents during this CINA case.

The judge sternly admonished both parties for ignoring court orders. He gave wise advise to both parties regarding future custody arrangements.

Very good listener and gave detailed explanations.

Speaks clearly and very easy to understand and follow.

Encouraged a settlement and gave credit to the experience and good faith of both attorneys.

The judge gave very clear and firm instructions on the court's expectations regarding their behavior and cooperation with each other.

The judge quickly took control of an often belligerent attorney.

A much more relaxed judge than I have previously observed.

The Honorable Kevin Saxby Anchorage Superior Court

Appointed by Governor Parnell to Anchorage Superior Court March 2012

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	107.7	Arraignment:	4	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	28	Change of Plea:	8	Pretrial Conference:	0
Positive Comments:	19	Civil Trial:	11	Sentencing:	7
Negative Comments:	16	Criminal Trial:	31	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	0	Trial Call:	1
		Jury Selection:	10	Other Hearings:	18
		Total Number of Evaluations:			90

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.74
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.47
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.26
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.52
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.46
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.49
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.61
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.42
	Overall Rating: 3.50

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	88 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	2 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	7 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	7

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Saxby:

Very clear that decisions are based on what is best for the children involved.

Smiles, even jests with both parties over how agreeable this divorce seems. Asked questions carefully designed to ensure they have considered possible future issues should their friendship deteriorate.

Seemed hesitant and confused about how to deal with the fact that neither party had complied with an agreed-to schedule for motions.

Lack of courtroom control.

The judge spent the entire 2½ hours of my observation taking notes - rarely looking up at witnesses or any participants. One of the attorneys had to remind the judge it was time for a scheduled break.

Concerned with complaints of each party and looked to past rulings regarding the validity of the current disputes.

Helpful and understanding when working with parents in this custody hearing.

Worked diligently with both attorneys to finalize jury instructions that would satisfy all parties.

Spoke so softly it was difficult to follow.

Came into the courtroom, introduced all parties and explained reason for the bail review. Went over the bail conditions very carefully, balancing requests from both sides and reached a fair and tough decision on bail. Great job.

Questioned several of the change of plea agreements and made sure each defendant knew what they were agreeing to by pleading guilty.

Carefully slows down the proceedings to make sure an ESL defendant and translator can keep up. Great job.

Again, very difficult to hear this judge.

Seemed slow to resolve contentious exchanges between attorneys.

Tends to have his hand in front of his mouth, making him difficult to hear.

The gallery could hear everything during sidebar discussions.

The judge demonstrated integrity and passion in upholding the legal system when discussing with both attorneys his observations of when a witness may have perjured himself. Great to observe.

Great explanations of legal terms.

The Honorable Eric Smith
Palmer Superior Court

Appointed by Governor Knowles to Palmer Superior Court April 1996

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	54.1	Arraignment:	5	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	11	Change of Plea:	7	Pretrial Conference:	0
Positive Comments:	27	Civil Trial:	9	Sentencing:	2
Negative Comments:	6	Criminal Trial:	4	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	1	Trial Call:	0
		Jury Selection:	2	Other Hearings:	32
		Total Number of Evaluations:			62

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.77
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.63
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.64
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.79
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.63
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.62
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.72
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.68
Overall Rating:	3.68

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	60 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	2 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	2 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	2

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Smith:

Very patient with a pro per defendant.

Asked questions and very active during this three judge panel court proceeding. Great to observe.

Relaxed, friendly and through.

The judge seemed to dismiss the pro per's comments readily. The judge advised parties continuously that another matter was scheduled. Just seemed to not be organized.

Cut off debate and moved trial along when attorneys got "objection happy".

Even though proceedings were mind-numbing, the judge showed great concentration in following testimony.

A tour de force by a highly experienced, competent judge. Great control of two very emotional parties. Great people management skills.

The judge was so upbeat and wonderful to observe during this adoption case.

Hearings seemed chaotic, but the judge juggled the cases very well. The Palmer court seems overwhelmed.

Rightly impatient with requests for continuances and excuses for not having motions filed.

Cuts through the bickering between parents quickly.

Showed great mediation skills.

Complimented parties on working so hard to come up with a settlement rather than go through further litigation.

So much confusion in the courtroom during these arraignments.

How the judge kept such a positive and patient attitude was beyond me during this tedious and confusing testimony.

PD office came to these hearing without paperwork and the judge was not happy. He made it clear that this was unacceptable.

Direct with both parties and their continued hostility. He expressed his own frustration and fear for the future of the child involved. Excellent, helpful and on-point.

The judge raises voice when frustrated and cuts people off. Second time I have seen this behavior this week. Seems very impatient.

The Honorable Jack Smith Anchorage Superior Court

Appointed by Governor Murkowski to Anchorage District Court January 2002
Appointed by Governor Murkowski to Anchorage Superior Court November 2006

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	158.5	Arraignment:	8	Pre-indictment Hearing:	1
No. of Observers:	28	Change of Plea:	0	Pretrial Conference:	0
Positive Comments:	38	Civil Trial:	0	Sentencing:	10
Negative Comments:	15	Criminal Trial:	73	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	0	Trial Call:	0
		Jury Selection:	12	Other Hearings:	10
		Total Number of Evaluations:			114

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.84
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.56
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.35
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.54
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.46
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.48
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.55
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.56
Overall Rating:	3.54

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	114 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	10 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	10

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Smith:

Patient and attentive in what has clearly been a contentious trial. Doesn't miss a thing happening in the courtroom.

The judge observed a juror sleeping during closing arguments and dealt with the issue with patience and professionalism.

Made sure there were no distractions with TV cameras in the courtroom. Attentive and explains events when necessary.

The judge went through all guidelines and considerations clearly during this sentencing and did it in a calm and thoughtful manner.

The judge postponed this sentencing in order to make sure the victim's family had every opportunity to make their statements.

The judge allowed one prospective juror to leave her cell phone on for at least 20 minutes while loud pig squeals marked the arrival of five new text messages. Finally an officer approached her to turn the device off.

The judge's use of eye contact with each participant and follow up questions displays his high level of attentiveness.

Attentive and engaged.

Very interesting discussion with expert witness regarding evidentiary issues. Thorough and easy to understand.

The courtroom was packed but this judge was very much in control.

The judge frequently looked at the jury while reading the jury instructions, making sure they were attentive.

Very difficult to hear. A twenty minute break turned into over an hour with no explanation.

The first 30 minutes of these hearings were noisy chaos. No one used a microphone and it was impossible to hear or make sense of what was happening.

Difficult to hear, used lots of acronyms and very difficult to understand proceedings.

The judge maintained control through a somewhat heated discussion between the attorneys on admissible evidence.

Soft spoken. Can't make out what the judge is saying sitting in the gallery.

Hard to hear and lots of acronyms during the arraignments.

The Honorable Michael Spaan Anchorage Superior Court

Appointed by Governor Murkowski to Anchorage Superior Court November 2007

Evaluations	Case Types
Evaluation Hours: 136.5	Arraignment: 5 Pre-indictment Hearing: 0
No. of Observers: 25	Change of Plea: 5 Pretrial Conference: 2
Positive Comments: 38	Civil Trial: 0 Sentencing: 7
Negative Comments: 12	Criminal Trial: 57 Small Claims: 0
	Domestic Violence: 0 Trial Call: 0
	Jury Selection: 11 Other Hearings: 8
	Total Number of Evaluations: 95

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.48
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.52
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.40
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.62
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.38
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.41
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.60
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.40
	Overall Rating: 3.48

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	94 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	1 evaluation.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	7 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	7

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Spaan:

The judge's demeanor is relaxed while actively managing the multiple cases.

Displayed exceptional patience with pro per defendant.

During jury selection, the judge uses humor in his interactions, lightening the mood in a lengthy process.

I can tell the judge is doing his best to guide the pro per defendant without appearing to assist.

Before the child victim testified, the judge set up a small table and chairs and sat with the child and attorneys and gently spoke with the child. The judge handled this with dignity.

Cleared up confusion regarding the defense attorney's question – very good.

Did a great job keeping the trial moving forward. Actively engaged in the process. Kudos.

Two male jurors were wearing hats – very inappropriate.

At times the judge was very difficult to hear.

The judge's responses and corrections indicate rapt attention. Firmly expresses annoyance with redundancy of one attorney's questions.

In a packed and noisy courtroom, the judge was patient, kept control and moved proceedings forward in an orderly manner.

The judge was thorough in the explanation of the sentence for this young defendant.

At the conclusion of the trial and absent the jury, the judge provided a meaningful critique for both attorneys.

Kind, firm and patient dealing with a difficult pro per situation.

When reading jury instructions at the beginning of this trial, the judge uses eye contact, voice inflections and gives examples to clarify the instructions to the jury.

Attentive, treated each defendant with respect and worked efficiently with attorneys to move through the cases.

A juror was sleeping.

Understandable explanation of a hearsay exception.

The Honorable John Suddock Anchorage Superior Court

Appointed by Governor Knowles to Anchorage Superior Court November 2002

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	54.3	Arraignment:	1	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	18	Change of Plea:	0	Pretrial Conference:	0
Positive Comments:	32	Civil Trial:	16	Sentencing:	2
Negative Comments:	1	Criminal Trial:	2	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	2	Trial Call:	0
		Jury Selection:	1	Other Hearings:	27
		Total Number of Evaluations:			51

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	4.02
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.86
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.80
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	4.02
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.87
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.94
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.95
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.88
	Overall Rating: 3.92

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	50 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	1 evaluation.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	2 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	2

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Suddock:

Timely, personable and patient. Very refreshing and welcome.

Very contentious case. Judge did well handling the outbursts of the pro per plaintiff.

The judge showed keen insight into the real problems of these individuals during this custody hearing.

All around great job.

Used appropriate humor, kept everyone relaxed and made this very serious case enjoyable to observe.

Relaxed but formal courtroom environment.

The judge made an outstanding impression on me today! Firmly controlled the pro per participants while maintaining a polite nature.

The judge provided much wisdom and meaningful guidance during this child custody modification review.

Patient and helpful to pro per participant, asked probing and thoughtful questions of both parties and used humor when getting to the realities of the parties dealing with the divorce and the best interests of their children.

With little help from either party, the judge formulated a grandparent visitation plan that was warmly agreed to by all.

The judge took over when the questioning went too long, cutting to the quick to get the facts. Great job.

This judge is amazing with his interesting and probing questions of the father to help clarify his role in parenting in the past, present and future. The line of inquiry is uniquely effective at getting genuine information and details. Excellent balance of fairness and concern for child.

The judge used humor and analogy to make understandable points. Asked very insightful questions. Has a folksy manner but is able to establish rapport with both sides. He comes across as kind and caring, a pleasure to observe.

In a complicated custody trial involving pro per parties, the judge somehow managed to evoke a coherent understanding of the facts, despite the emotional and often digressive behavior of both parties.

The Honorable Alex Swiderski Anchorage District Court

Appointed by Governor Murkowski to Anchorage District Court April 2005

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	46.3	Arraignment:	6	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	18	Change of Plea:	1	Pretrial Conference:	0
Positive Comments:	23	Civil Trial:	1	Sentencing:	0
Negative Comments:	7	Criminal Trial:	6	Small Claims:	1
		Domestic Violence:	0	Trial Call:	0
		Jury Selection:	2	Other Hearings:	14
		Total Number of Evaluations:			31

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.83
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.61
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.26
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.74
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.71
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.72
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.97
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.61
Overall Rating:	3.68

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	31 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	0 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	0

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Swiderski:

The judge explains decisions in lay terms and makes eye contact while talking to all participants.

Understanding attitude and clear explanations.

After noticing a juror was having trouble concentrating, the judge suggested that more frequent breaks might be necessary.

Court was scheduled to start at 2:00 PM. The courtroom was packed. The judge started court 30 minutes late and offered no reason or apology.

The judge showed genuine concern for all parties, addressed most defendants by first name and was very encouraging to all participants in Wellness Court.

Halted the trial until a qualified interpreter could be located to assist the plaintiff. Very attentive to details.

The judge uses a kind voice, shows a sincere interest in each party's progress and struggles, and is positive and encouraging during Wellness Court.

Polite, patient and got to the core of each small claims case in short order. Well prepared and moved the hearings forward smoothly.

A soft voice coupled with the noise from the gallery made it hard to hear the judge at times.

A cell phone was ringing in the courtroom, but nothing was said.

Organized, proceeds efficiently, listens carefully and works diligently to get parties to settle.

The judge patiently explained the differences between each type of hearing being held. He pleasantly but firmly told an attorney that she had already had seven months to prepare for trial and the trial would begin later in the week as it had been calendared. Great job.

At times the judge was very hard to hear and understand.

When asked why one defendant wasn't given drug and alcohol treatment, the judge reviewed the case and ordered residential treatment. Good for the judge. Great job.

Thorough in explanations regarding objections. Very easy to understand.

Very patient with a very hyperactive attorney.

The Honorable Sen Tan Anchorage Superior Court

Appointed by Governor Knowles to Anchorage Superior Court December 1996

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	52.6	Arraignment:	0	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	14	Change of Plea:	0	Pretrial Conference:	1
Positive Comments:	14	Civil Trial:	25	Sentencing:	0
Negative Comments:	7	Criminal Trial:	0	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	2	Trial Call:	0
		Jury Selection:	1	Other Hearings:	11
		Total Number of Evaluations:			40

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.78
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.62
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.21
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.61
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.66
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.66
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.63
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.56
	Overall Rating: 3.59

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	39 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	1 evaluation.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	0 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	0

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Tan:

Very detailed as to all the proceedings that would be followed in this case.

Sometimes the judge is difficult to hear.

Direct and to the point. Very attentive.

Very considerate to all participants.

Hard to hear.

The judge clearly and precisely explained why a motion for a directed verdict was denied.

The judge uses humor very effectively when dealing with a motion by the defense and dealt with the arguments regarding the motion with patience.

Admonished the defense attorney for meeting privately with plaintiff's hostile witness during a break.

Listened carefully throughout the proceeding and ruled decisively when objections were made.

Jury instructions were made interesting by interjecting some humor.

After cautioning the pro per plaintiff that a judge cannot give legal advice, the judge explained how the procedure would move forward. The judge patiently and firmly repeated explanations to keep the pro per party on track. The judge asked the defense attorney to resist using legal verbiage so proceedings were more fair to the pro per. I was very impressed with the judge's courtesy, gentle authority and fairness.

Thoughtful and considerate to all participants, asked questions to clarify issues and a very attentive listener.

The judge did not seem to understand the goal of the plaintiff's attorney and really seemed to favor one party over the other.

Just can't hear the judge.

With four attorneys representing as many parties, the judge was more than up to the challenge of a very busy court session.

Very difficult to hear.

Uses anecdotal stories to illustrate points and inspire couples to reach an agreement.

Very patient with a pro per party that was frustrated with the rules of the court.

The Honorable Philip Volland Anchorage Superior Court

Appointed by Governor Knowles to Anchorage Superior Court November 2002

Evaluations	Case Types
Evaluation Hours: 131.0	Arraignment: 11 Pre-indictment Hearing: 1
No. of Observers: 27	Change of Plea: 4 Pretrial Conference: 2
Positive Comments: 39	Civil Trial: 0 Sentencing: 11
Negative Comments: 16	Criminal Trial: 34 Small Claims: 0
	Domestic Violence: 0 Trial Call: 0
	Jury Selection: 15 Other Hearings: 22
	Total Number of Evaluations: 100

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.66
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.61
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.46
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.53
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.55
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.52
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.70
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.55
	Overall Rating: 3.57

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	100 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	11 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	11

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Volland:

Excellent judge. Explained reasons for sentencing in detail. He has my respect and admiration.

Although his voice is serious, it is also quite calming. Very thorough with his explanations.

I appreciate this judge standing when the jurors enter the courtroom.

This judge is noticeably more deliberate in his speaking than others: however it would be extremely helpful if he could refrain from the expression "uh" so often. It would help listeners follow his line of questioning and thought.

The judge showed empathy toward a potential juror. He was polite and professional during his interactions with all parties.

The judge is very good at explaining court proceedings and expressing himself. Good details.

Great information given to potential jurors regarding expectations and probable hours of time commitment.

Patient and thorough with pro per defendant.

Educational explanation of admissible evidence.

It is always a pleasure to observe this judge. Studied, thorough and timely at the bench. Very interesting to observe this evidentiary hearing.

Kept things moving right along in a very busy courtroom.

The judge took time with us (observers) to see if we had questions. It was appreciated.

Very busy courtroom. The judge reviewed each file carefully and his decisions were clear and easy to follow.

The judge took extra time to carefully explain each change of plea.

Carefully and methodically went over the pre-sentencing report and had several questions during this sentencing.

Clear explanation of how the jury selection process would proceed. Very sympathetic to prospective jurors regarding financial hardships.

Painfully trying to wait for the judge to get through a sentence.

Great observation between the judge and attorneys regarding questions from the jury. Very clear and decisive in rulings.

The Honorable David Wallace Anchorage District Court

Appointed by Governor Palin to Anchorage District Court January 2009

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	60.8	Arraignment:	11	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	23	Change of Plea:	5	Pretrial Conference:	1
Positive Comments:	36	Civil Trial:	0	Sentencing:	0
Negative Comments:	10	Criminal Trial:	6	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	0	Trial Call:	0
		Jury Selection:	1	Other Hearings:	30
		Total Number of Evaluations:			54

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.94
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.67
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.76
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	4.00
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.67
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.79
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.98
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.74
Overall Rating:	3.82

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	54 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	0 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	0

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Wallace:

Patient with a defendant that was upset about her case, explaining all court procedures in layman's terms. The judge was fair and moved swiftly through the docket without rushing.

Several defendants said they couldn't hear the judge.

Slow moving today. Defendants seemed unruly and the judge had little control over the courtroom.

Clearly explains what is happening, never assuming the defendant has heard it all before. Listens patiently and is firm in decisions. Makes a concerted effort to know whether defendants understand what has been said.

The judge's professional attitude, sincere encouragement and touch of humor are major contributions to the success of the Veteran's Wellness Court.

Lots of acronyms used without explanation. Spoke while looking down and couldn't hear much of what was happening.

Clear and understandable explanation of pre-trial diversion process.

Always a pleasure to observe this judge when presiding over Veteran's Wellness Court. Positive and encouraging, yet can be stern when needed.

REALLY listens to comments made by attorneys and defendants during these hearings. Exceptional use of time - took no breaks, just kept cases moving forward. Excellent, caring attitude. Wonderful listener.

The judge displays an ideal judicial temperament and consistently performs in a superior manner.

Court starts on time. Calm, upbeat and encouraging to veterans in compliance. Great memory of each participant's backstories. Shows a genuine interest and determination to guide participants towards improving their situations. Wonderful to observe.

Controlled the arraignments and moved the cases along without rushing through them.

Sensitive to concerns and very encouraging to all participants in Veteran's Wellness Court. Seems to have a great rapport with all courtroom participants.

Direct and calm with a defendant that lashed out in the Veteran's Wellness Court.

The Honorable Pamela Scott Washington Anchorage District Court

Appointed by Governor Parnell to Anchorage District Court August 2010

Evaluations	Case Types
Evaluation Hours: 77.0	Arraignment: 5 Pre-indictment Hearing: 0
No. of Observers: 25	Change of Plea: 1 Pretrial Conference: 0
Positive Comments: 30	Civil Trial: 3 Sentencing: 0
Negative Comments: 13	Criminal Trial: 8 Small Claims: 11
	Domestic Violence: 0 Trial Call: 0
	Jury Selection: 5 Other Hearings: 25
	Total Number of Evaluations: 58

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.69
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.47
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.55
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.53
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.56
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.63
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.60
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.60
	Overall Rating: 3.58

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	57 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	1 evaluation.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	0 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	0

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Washington:

Very difficult to hear the judge.

The judge was patient with a pro per defendant and allowed some latitude without being preferential. Polite and respectful to all participants.

Clear and direct. Helpful to all participants. Made it very clear regarding the consequences of failure to follow court orders.

This is my first observation of this judge and I think she is a shining example of what a judge should be.

These were CRP hearings. One defendant used curse words several times. I was surprised the judge did not tell him that inappropriate language was not acceptable.

Very positive and enthusiastic regarding the success of participants in CRP hearings.

The judge gave very detailed information on the law that was understandable and thorough regarding evictions. The judge had all participants reiterate their agreements to make sure everyone clearly understood.

I observed this judge in her first CRP hearings and wanted to re-visit her courtroom to see if she remained as involved and dynamic. She has!

The judge's voice has good volume, yet she speaks rapidly, making it a bit more difficult to follow.

I think the judge was very lenient during this restitution hearing.

Works efficiently in juggling cases in order to accommodate attorneys and language interpreting needs.

During these small claims cases the judge encouraged mediation, was attentive, respectful of all parties and spoke in a manner that could be understood.

There was some confusion about whether this was a contested or uncontested hearing. The judge did acknowledge a lack of experience for this type of hearing.

Did an extraordinary job in making sure all parties fully understood the eviction hearing. Mediated fairly and showed appropriated empathy.

Seemed a little uncertain and ill prepared of case law regarding hearsay. Also a little undecided on the jury selection process and the attorneys had to ask lots of questions to clarify how it was going to work.

The Honorable Vanessa White Palmer Superior Court

Appointed by Governor Murkowski to Palmer Superior Court November 2006

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	72.7	Arraignment:	0	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	9	Change of Plea:	8	Pretrial Conference:	0
Positive Comments:	38	Civil Trial:	13	Sentencing:	4
Negative Comments:	6	Criminal Trial:	8	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	2	Trial Call:	2
		Jury Selection:	0	Other Hearings:	29
		Total Number of Evaluations:			66

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.95
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.84
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.82
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.92
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.76
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.81
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.92
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.86
Overall Rating:	3.86

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	66 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	4 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	4

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge White:

The courtroom was quiet and the microphones worked well. Judge was attentive, polite and respectful to all parties during this observation.

Nice job of controlling the courtroom during these hearings.

Used everyday language. Went into great detail so parties would have no misunderstandings in this settlement conference.

The judge ruled very equitably on custody arrangements. Went into great detail outlining responsibilities so there would be no arguments and no mistakes. Great job.

Acts as mediator in promoting a settlement. Patient when meeting with parties individually to discuss what each feels are the most valuable assets, regardless of the dollar value. Wonderful to observe this proceeding.

Attentive. Clearly outlined the obligations of both parents.

Lots of noise and activity going on the gallery during the proceeding.

Provided a clear explanation of a suspended imposition of sentence and let the defendant know the court's expectation.

Kept things moving, good sense of humor and relaxed but definitely in charge.

Firm, fair and engaged in all testimony.

Overall message was one of hope and rehabilitation during this adjudication.

The judge showed great mediation skills. Relates well with all the parties. Puts a human face on the court.

The judge combines a professional manner with a caring attitude.

Tough eviction case was handled with courtesy and patience.

The judge facilitated the proceeding by using everyday conversational language to simplify complex issues.

The judge showed truly outstanding mediation and human relationship skills as she moved the parties from a position of a non-negotiable demand to a honest, constructive dialog. Wonderful.

Became frustrated with the DA's missing paperwork and rightly so.

Both parties had violated court orders. The judge clearly and firmly explained what they needed to do to avoid further problems with the court.

The Honorable John Wolfe Palmer District Court

Appointed by Governor Murkowski to Palmer District Court November 2004

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	45.5	Arraignment:	11	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	9	Change of Plea:	3	Pretrial Conference:	0
Positive Comments:	19	Civil Trial:	1	Sentencing:	0
Negative Comments:	4	Criminal Trial:	3	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	8	Trial Call:	1
		Jury Selection:	2	Other Hearings:	20
				Total Number of Evaluations:	49

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.80
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.66
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.65
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.73
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.63
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.65
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.56
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.76
Overall Rating:	3.68

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	49 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	0 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	0

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Wolfe:

Jury attentive, gallery quiet and attorneys respectful. Nice change for a Palmer courtroom.

Attentive, easy to hear and remarks were understandable.

Good job today during arraignments.

The judge spoke loudly, clearly and authoritatively.

Kept hearings on track with impressive efficiency.

The judge did a great job explaining requirements to the jurors, introduced the attorneys and provided an explanation when jurors were excused.

Busy calendar, stayed organized, respectful and pleasant.

Worked hard to get participants to at least talk to one another to settle trespass allegations.

Great job handling a belligerent defendant.

No loud chatter going on during these hearings. Spoke directly to each defendant. Very detailed and easy to understand.

Handled this DV case in an efficient and caring manner.

Thorough, polite, organized and attentive.

With more than 50 cases on the docket, the judge stayed calm and polite with each defendant.

Excellent technique dealing with DV cases.

The defendant and attorney were late but the judge said nothing.

Contentious hearing and the judge showed excellent control.

Put an edge in his voice when one attorney began pushing the envelope too far.

Doesn't let either side get into arguments with each other. Clear with reasonings and explanation of rulings and decisions.

Judge carefully focused on the rehabilitation aspect of each defendant.

Helpful, polite and pleasant.

The Honorable Michael Wolverton

Anchorage Superior Court

Appointed by Governor Cowper to Anchorage District Court August 1988
 Appointed by Governor Knowles to Anchorage Superior Court December 1996

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	105.9	Arrestment:	14	Pre-indictment Hearing:	2
No. of Observers:	26	Change of Plea:	6	Pretrial Conference:	0
Positive Comments:	39	Civil Trial:	0	Sentencing:	5
Negative Comments:	12	Criminal Trial:	40	Small Claims:	0
		Domestic Violence:	0	Trial Call:	0
		Jury Selection:	16	Other Hearings:	23
		Total Number of Evaluations: 106			

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.78
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.76
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.52
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.64
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.60
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.67
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.67
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.61
	Overall Rating: 3.66

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	106 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	5 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	5

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Wolverton:

Displays a sense of humor.

The judge was attentive and thoroughly explained his decisions in this case with three co-defendants.

The judge mumbles and I had to strain to hear what was being said.

The judge listened attentively to both attorneys and witnesses before handing down the sentence. When speaking, the judge was calm, stern and showed much thought had been given to his fair and reasonable sentence.

Excellent job. Shows respect for all participants.

During closing arguments a juror was sound asleep for quite some time.

Gave clear instructions on the jury selection process to the pro per defendant.

Explanation regarding submission of taped evidence was clear and concise. Very educational for this observer.

I couldn't hear the judge or understand what was being said.

Polite, considerate, firm but kind. Worked calmly and efficiently through numerous change of pleas.

Very difficult to hear again today.

Very attentive. When a person in the gallery was thought to be coaching a witness, the judge asked that they leave the courtroom.

Eloquent when thanking jurors for their service.

Very patient with the translation process during this change of plea.

Explained each defendant's rights carefully and not as if by rote.

Attentive and thorough during this emotional change of plea.

Handled a disruptive defendant quickly.

Runs a very tight and efficient courtroom without being overbearing.

Quickly halts an argumentative attorney.

With a packed courtroom, the judge reminded spectators to keep quiet and respect the proceedings.

The Honorable David Zwink Palmer District Court

Appointed by Governor Parnell to Palmer District Court January 2010

Evaluations		Case Types			
Evaluation Hours:	31.8	Arraignment:	0	Pre-indictment Hearing:	0
No. of Observers:	7	Change of Plea:	7	Pretrial Conference:	1
Positive Comments:	15	Civil Trial:	0	Sentencing:	0
Negative Comments:	1	Criminal Trial:	4	Small Claims:	1
		Domestic Violence:	2	Trial Call:	0
		Jury Selection:	2	Other Hearings:	16
		Total Number of Evaluations:			33

Did the judge . . .	(Each category is rated 1 - 5 by observers.)
. . . pay attention to the proceedings and participants?	3.45
. . . maintain control of the courtroom?	3.42
. . . speak loudly and clearly?	3.61
. . . make remarks that were understood and that made sense?	3.52
. . . show understanding and consideration to the plaintiff/victim (present or not)?	3.39
. . . show understanding and consideration to the defendant (present or not)?	3.42
. . . take time to explain the proceedings to participants?	3.50
. . . treat all participants fairly and impartially?	3.36
Overall Rating:	3.46

Did the judge appear to favor either side?	
Did not favor either side:	33 evaluations.
Favored the defense:	0 evaluations.
Favored the prosecution:	0 evaluations.

During sentencings, the judge was . . .	
Lenient:	0 evaluations.
Reasonable:	0 evaluations.
Severe:	0 evaluations.
Total Sentencings:	0

Comments

The following comments are a sampling of those made during observations of Judge Zwink:

Prior to the arraignment video and the judge entering the courtroom, the clerk announced that once the in-custody defendants entered the courtroom, any contact with them, verbal or otherwise, would not be tolerated. This is a welcome change.

The judge moved expeditiously through the proceedings, controlling the tempo. Polite and professional to all participants.

Thoroughly explained rights and responsibilities, applied Chaney Criteria and had control of the hearings.

Clear explanation of rights. Projects authority.

Efficiently went through a large number of cases and ran a tight ship with a sense of decorum and humor.

Gave a great talk to young defendants regarding future problems with their use of alcohol.

During these small claims cases, the judge made sure each side was heard and thanked the parties for their participation.

Definitely not a "rubber stamp" judge. Clearly explained his thought process during change of pleas.

Very chaotic hearing today.

The judge takes a personal interest in each defendant's situation.

Great talk to one defendant on the need to change their life style. Very thorough.

Patiently and carefully explained to a landlord the problems with the eviction notice and the action that had taken place.

Promoted a collegial atmosphere when working through the crafting of the jury instructions.

No nonsense manner in his courtroom. Not afraid to reprimand non-participants for disrupting the court proceedings. Showed outstanding skills in controlling the courtroom.

Clear, concise and moves the proceedings along smoothly.

Tactful, but firm when informing a participant that if he wanted to represent himself he needed to become familiar with the landlord-tenant laws.

Acknowledgements

by
Kathleen Rice, Executive Director

For the last twelve years I have had the privilege of meeting and working with so many wonderful people, all of whom have made Alaska Judicial Observers the outstanding non-profit it is today.

Our courtroom volunteers go through hours of comprehensive training, attend workshops and spend countless hours in courtrooms observing judicial performance. Without their dedication and enthusiasm, Alaska Judicial Observers would not exist. These volunteers give so much of their personal and family time, whether it is in the dead of winter and they would rather be warm in their homes, or in the height of summer when they would rather be outside enjoying time with family and friends – they give their wholehearted commitment to our program. They are the backbone of AJO. Thank you.

The Board of Directors may be small in number but their level of participation is huge. They have been with AJO since the beginning and are supportive and active in many ways. They are available at a moment's notice and will do whatever is necessary to help in the office, attend our training classes and observe in courtrooms. Thank you so much Bob, Chris and Pat.

This is our sixth Biennial Report. Glen Denning is solely responsible for putting the data into a professional and understandable format. He not only built the database, he maintains it and patiently (and I mean very patiently) works with me and teaches me new computer skills. Glen also maintains our office computer and will drop by the office day or night to assist us with any glitch that comes our way. He and his wife Kris are moving to Colorado where Kris has taken a position with the crime lab in Denver. Glen has assured me that with modern technology he will still be here for us and will continue to keep me on track! Glen, I will miss you so much. On behalf of everyone associated with AJO, thank you for everything you do for us. We all wish only the best for you and Kris as you begin this new adventure in your lives.

Last year AJO had the great fortune of hiring Holly Hill as our Office Manager. She has brought new life to our program. It has been a truly wonderful experience for me to have the opportunity to work with her as she expanded our volunteer activities, started a newsletter and continues to somehow juggle office responsibilities with volunteer training in Anchorage, Kenai and Palmer. Holly is a truly amazing co-worker and AJO is so proud to have someone of her caliber guiding our Anchorage office. You, Holly, are the best of the best. Thank you.

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