

Sample Evaluation Selection Notification Letter to Judges from the AOIC



Supreme Court of Illinois ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE ILLINOIS COURTS

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February 18, 2025

Hon. FULL NAME
ADDRESS 1
ADDRESS 2
CITY, STATE, ZIP

Dear Judge LAST NAME:

I am writing to you regarding the Illinois Judicial Performance Evaluation (JPE) program. You have been randomly selected for participation in the 2025 cycle of evaluations. As you may be aware, in December 2008, the Supreme Court promulgated strategies to improve and enhance judicial performance and accountability for Illinois judges. As a component of those strategies, Supreme Court Rule 58 was amended to mandate that, on a periodic and random basis, every circuit and associate judge in the state participate in a judicial performance evaluation after completion of at least three years on the bench. The Judicial Performance Evaluation Committee has interpreted the phrase "periodic" to mean eligibility for random selection up to once every five years. Therefore, under the new guidelines, judges who may have previously completed an evaluation can be randomly selected again.

By way of background, the Administrative Office has contracted with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to administer the judicial performance evaluation survey and facilitator process. Within the next few weeks, you will receive NCSC correspondence (letter and emails) regarding the next steps of your participation in the evaluation process. If you have any questions about the program, evaluation process, or your participation in a judicial performance evaluation at this time, please contact the Administrative Office via phone or email as noted below.

Please take time to read Rule 58, which is enclosed for your reference, as a part of preparing for your participation. Rule 58 maintain the essential confidentiality of the evaluation process but add an exception to the rule. The current rule allows for chief judges and the Supreme Court in limited circumstances to have access to the judicial performance evaluations of circuit court and associate judges whose conduct allegedly negatively impacts the operations of the courts or the public confidence in the courts or who persistently fail to perform satisfactorily or to comply with the directives of the chief judges.

Because this limited confidentiality exception is new, a request by a chief judge or the Supreme Court for access to the judicial performance evaluations of a circuit court or associate judge applies only to those judicial performance evaluations initiated after the effective date of this amendment.

Please note Rule 58 was recently amended 12/20/2023 and became effective immediately. The Clerk of the Circuit Court in which the selected judges sit shall now, upon request from the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, provide a report or reports to that agency that lists specific attorney contact information, as outlined in amended Rule 58.

The multiple benefits to be gleaned from the program to Illinois' judiciary are dependent upon each participant's complete and earnest participation. It is my sincere hope that you find the evaluation process meaningful and valuable.

Further, upon your completion of the process, we invite your comments and suggestions to improve and enhance this initiative. On behalf of the Supreme Court, I wish to thank you, in advance, for your participation and commitment to enhancing the performance of Illinois' judiciary. As stated earlier, should you have any questions with respect to the judicial performance evaluation program or believe your participation at this time creates a hardship or may be inappropriate (i.e. medical leave, retirement within one year), kindly contact me or Ms. Jana Brooks at (217) 782- 9273 or jbrooks@illinoiscourts.gov.

Sincerely,



Nathan Jensen,
Director, Court Services Division, AOIC

Enclosure

CC: Hon. Joy V. Cunningham, Justice, Supreme Court of Illinois
Hon. Diann Marsalek, JPE Committee Chair
Hon. <<Chief_Judge>>, Chief Judge, <<Circuit2>> Judicial Circuit
Marica Meis, Administrative Director, AOIC
Jana Brooks, Court Programs Administrator, AOIC

Sample Email to Judges from the NCSC - Post AOIC Letter

March 4, 2025

Hello Your Honor,

On behalf of the Supreme Court of Illinois, you have been selected for participation in the 2025 cycle of the Judicial Performance Evaluation (JPE) program. As you know, pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 58, judicial participation in the Illinois JPE program is mandatory. Every Circuit and Associate Judge in Illinois is required, on a periodic and random basis, to participate in a confidential JPE after completion of at least three years on the bench. The National Center for State Courts (NCSC, see www.ncsc.org) has developed and oversees the JPE program with the AOIC. As part of the program, we will survey attorneys and other court personnel. Following the evaluations, the results report of your JPE – which must be kept confidential – will be provided to you, and to a selected judge (facilitator) who will review the results with you, for your personal benefit.

For administrative efficiency and quality assurance, the JPE program progresses in a series of rounds, or Waves, throughout the year. Your Wave has been randomly selected. You are in: **Wave 2**. This means that you should compile your list of court staff/other personnel nominee names beginning now, and that your deadline for this list's completion, and your sending of the list to NCSC, is: **May 2, 2025**. You can begin compiling your list of nominees earlier if you like. Rule 58 has been modified to require the clerk of the court to provide a list of attorney nominees for this process, so **you will not be required to submit a list of attorneys**.

Please note that although your Wave selection is random, you can supersede this schedule by personal request, as follows:

- If you wish to complete your list early, you can send it to NCSC at any time.
- If you wish to be moved into a Wave later in the year, to provide you with more time, you can contact Mandy Allen with that request. There are four scheduled Waves throughout the year. Lists received after **May 2, 2025**, will be deemed late for processing by NCSC, and formal exceptions can only be approved by the AOIC.

During the timeframe listed above, you should begin to prepare a compilation of court staff nominees (with first names, last names, and verified e-mail addresses) to participate in your evaluation. The court staff/other personnel nominees will provide feedback on your performance of a more limited scope. Please note:

- **The clerk of court will provide at least 125 names of attorneys** for the evaluation process. The attorneys must have appeared before you in court at least once within the past 24 months.
- Nominated *court personnel* must be non-judge individuals with whom you work *in the courtroom*, not outside of the courtroom, due to the questions asked. In addition to court employees, you may nominate employees of agencies and law offices who are familiar with your work in the courtroom. To ensure that at least **FIVE (5)** employees/personnel complete a survey, it is best that you nominate at least **TEN (10)** employees/personnel.

Here is what you should do at this time:

- From now until May 2, 2025, you will compile the names and e-mail addresses of all of your court staff/personnel nominees. A spreadsheet-format table for your use has been included as an e-mail attachment with this notice. You can use it as an electronic file, or print it, to record your nominee information. If you use a hardcopy form, please do not handwrite your entries, because in the past this has led to errors, omissions, and unreadable text. Type the entries instead. Providing a handwritten list is likely to negatively impact your survey response rate, which will impact the comprehensiveness of your resulting report.
- If you have any questions about the nomination process, please contact Ms. Allen at msallen@ncsc.org.
- When your list of nominees is complete, please e-mail it to Mandy Allen at msallen@ncsc.org no later than **May 2, 2025**. Wave deadlines must be kept for the JPE program to remain on schedule throughout the year. If you need more time, contact Ms. Allen to be placed in a future Wave. Late lists will result in your evaluation not taking place in a timely fashion. If your list of nominees appears to be incomplete, or there are blanks or errors, Ms. Allen will contact you for clarification during the week immediately following May 2, 2025.

After your list has been provided and reviewed, the surveying process will begin for all nominees. The confidential feedback you receive will then be provided to you, and to your selected judge facilitator, later in the year (following an intensive analysis phase). A meeting with your facilitator will then be scheduled at your convenience to review the results. The results as stated in the report will be confidential and known only to you and your facilitator.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

For additional information regarding the Illinois JPE program, please contact the program liaison, Court Operations Analyst Jana Brooks, in Springfield at (217) 782-9273 or jbrooks@IllinoisCourts.gov.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Tallarico

Principal Court Management Consultant, Court Consulting Services

NCSC Project Director, Illinois Judicial Performance Evaluation (JPE) Program

(via)

Mandy Allen

Senior Court Management Consultant, Court Consulting Services

National Center for State Courts

Sample Pre-Notice Letter to Attorney and Court Personnel Evaluators

Dear Attorney,

As someone who has recent courtroom experience working with judges in Illinois, you are uniquely qualified to provide performance feedback. For this reason, on **Monday, May 20, 2024**, you will receive an email invitation to participate in the Supreme Court of Illinois' Judicial Performance Evaluation of a judge that you have appeared before within the past two years. When you receive the Monday invitation from the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), we hope that you will participate. The survey will remain open until **June 7, 2024**.

You are receiving this email today because many in the court community like to know in advance if they will be asked to complete a judicial performance evaluation survey. This email is intended to provide you with important information about the Supreme Court of Illinois' Judicial Performance Evaluation (JPE) Program and your key role in the evaluation process. When you receive the email with the survey link, you will also learn the name of the judge you will be evaluating.

At this time and until May 20, no action from you is necessary, unless you feel you are receiving this email in error. (You may receive this e-mail multiple times, if you have appeared before multiple judges.)

We hope you will enjoy the opportunity to voice your feedback about performance in the forthcoming JPE survey. The Supreme Court of Illinois' Judicial Performance Evaluation Program can only succeed in its mission to support judicial excellence with the generous help of people like you. I am attaching to this email, a fantastic article by Judge Mitchell Hoffman (Ret.), explaining the Illinois Judicial Performance Evaluation process.

Please stay safe and well. We thank you for your ongoing vigilance and support for the Illinois Judicial Performance Evaluation endeavor – as well as for your professional consideration of the judges of Illinois.

Sincerely,
Laurie K. Givens
Vice President

Suzanne Tallarico
IL JPE Project Director and Principal Court Management Consultant

Mandy Allen
Senior Court Management Consultant

National Center for State Courts
Court Consulting Services Division

www.ncsc.org

*** (Beyond this point is an FAQ for your reference, if you have further questions.)*

[1] What is the Supreme Court of Illinois' Judicial Performance Evaluation Program?

Supreme Court Rule 58, amended in 2023, requires each circuit and associate court judge to undergo a performance evaluation process for the purposes of self-improvement. A Supreme Court committee established the procedures of the mandatory JPE Program. The Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts (AOIC) selected the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) as the organization to administer the JPE Program (for more information about NCSC, see www.ncsc.org).

Each year, the AOIC randomly selects a group of judges to participate in the evaluation process. As part of this process, qualified attorneys and court personnel are asked to complete a performance evaluation survey for each judge. Participation is voluntary and evaluation survey responses are strictly confidential. Evaluated judges receive a report of aggregate results only, along with any optional written feedback, from the completed evaluation surveys. Each judge meets with a trained facilitator to discuss the performance feedback and to identify appropriate strategies for achieving self-improvement objectives.

The NCSC collects all evaluation data, develops the aggregate results reports for each judge to help inform individual self-improvement, and prepares aggregate annual reports to the AOIC that may be used to help inform decisions about the development of new judicial education programs and other initiatives for the improvement of the judiciary. No judge or any other Illinois official will have access to any information about who completed a JPE survey, nor any data identifying how specific individuals answered evaluation questions.

For additional information about the JPE program, please contact Ms. Jana Brooks of the AOIC Court Services Division, by email at jbrooks@Illinoiscourts.gov or by phone. Please note that due to COVID-19 work circumstances, response to phone inquiries could possibly be delayed.

[2] How will I be asked to share my feedback about <judge name>'s recent performance?

The email invitation you will receive from the Qualtrics survey tool will provide you with a secure web link and your unique login information to access the web-based performance evaluation survey for one or more judges. In the survey, all respondents are asked to rate the judge on a series of questions and are given the option to provide additional written comments for the judge. For the best user experience, we recommend completing the JPE survey on a laptop or desktop computer rather than on a mobile device.

If you cannot complete the JPE survey on the web but would like to request a PDF version to complete and submit by email, please respond to this email with your request. The NCSC Help Desk Specialist, Mandy Allen, will follow up with you personally.

[3] What should I do if I think this advance notification was sent to me in error, or if I have other questions?

Should you have any questions about your participation in this JPE survey, please contact the NCSC Help Desk Specialist, Mandy Allen, by email msallen@ncsc.org . E-mail correspondence is preferred, as several thousand individuals are receiving these notices and call volume, particularly on Mondays, may be high. Please note also that due to COVID-19 and remote work circumstances, responses to phone inquiries might be delayed.

If you believe this notification to be in error (e.g., you have not worked before this judge, or this e-mail address is incorrectly attributed), please notify Ms. Allen by responding to this email with clarification. We will update the existing records, so you do not receive inappropriate correspondence in the future.

Sample Letter to Facilitators for 2025 Evaluation Cycle

Dear Judge >>>Facilitator Name<<<,

The National Center for State Courts JPE project staff has assigned you to meet with Judge >>>Evaluated Judge Name<<< to discuss the results of the 2025 Judicial Performance Evaluation. The match was made via random assignment based on potential facilitator availability and adjacent judicial circuit location. (The AOIC also asks that we not assign facilitators from the same Circuit as the evaluated judge, whenever possible.) As the assigned judicial facilitator, you will be contacting the judge soon to set up a face-to-face meeting (or telephonic or by video, if necessary, due to difficulty or distance) to discuss the confidential evaluation results, which are not to be shared with others beyond yourself and the evaluated judge.

If you are unable to conduct this facilitation, or if there are any conflicts of interest between you and this judge, please contact Mandy Allen (e-mail and phone number are listed below) as soon as possible so that we can re-assign another. Otherwise, you are free to contact the evaluated judge at your convenience.

Once you have scheduled a facilitation date with the evaluated judge, the NCSC will FedEx a copy of the evaluation report to you prior to your meeting. Please provide me with the best physical mailing address for the evaluation report. FedEx requires a signature for the release of secure documents, so if you provide a residential address, please consider that (a) you will likely need to be there in person to sign for the parcel and (b) you will need to inform us that you are using a residential address so we can note that in the FedEx manifest to avoid additional charges.

Please try to schedule your facilitation discussion to take place within the next six to eight weeks in a setting conducive to the confidentiality of the process, and please let me know the date of your facilitation meeting so the report can be sent at the appropriate time.

A Confidentiality Agreement form is also attached, and must be signed and sent back to Mandy Allen, either via e-mailed scan (msallen@ncsc.org) or hardcopy to: National Center for State Courts, Attn: Mandy Allen, 28524 Alessandria Circle, Bonita Springs, Florida 34135. Please refer to the Confidentiality Agreement for additional information.

Below is the contact information for your assigned evaluated judge.

>>>Judge Title / Name<<<

>>>Judge Address<<<

>>>Judge E-Mail<<<

>>>Judge Phone Number<<<

If you are able to conduct this facilitation, you should contact the above-mentioned judge. When you have scheduled an appointment with the judge, please also provide us with the date

of the meeting for prompt mailing on our behalf. If there are any other questions or concerns, please contact either Mandy Allen at msallen@ncsc.org or 303-308-4312 (remote forwarded voice mail) or Nathan Jensen at njensen@IllinoisCourts.gov or 217-785-2125.

Thank you! We appreciate your assistance in furthering the Illinois JPE program with your efforts.

Sincerely,

Mandy Allen, Court Management Consultant
(on behalf of) Laurie K. Givens, Vice President

Sample E-Mail to Facilitator Regarding Judge-Facilitator Match

E-Mail Subject: NCSC – Scheduling of a Judicial Performance Evaluation (JPE) Facilitation Meeting

Dear Judge >>>Facilitator Name<<<,

The National Center for State Courts JPE project staff has assigned you to meet with Judge >>>Evaluated Judge Name<<< to discuss the results of the 2025 Judicial Performance Evaluation. The match was made via random assignment based on potential facilitator availability and adjacent judicial circuit location. (The AOIC also asks that we not assign facilitators from the same Circuit as the evaluated judge, whenever possible.) As the assigned judicial facilitator, you will be contacting the judge soon to set up a face-to-face meeting to discuss the confidential evaluation results, which are not to be shared with others beyond yourself and the evaluated judge.

Please let us know if this assignment is not workable, or if you are not ready to perform facilitations. If you are unable to conduct this facilitation, or if there are any conflicts of interest between you and this judge, please contact Mandy Allen (e-mail and phone number are listed below) as soon as possible so that we can reassign a more fitting facilitator. Otherwise, you are free to contact the evaluated judge at your convenience.

Once you have scheduled a facilitation date with the evaluated judge, please notify me of the date you will be meeting, and I will FedEx a copy of the evaluation report to you prior to your meeting. Please provide me with the best physical mailing address for the evaluation report. FedEx requires a signature for the release of secure documents, so if you provide a residential address, please consider that (a) you will likely need to be there in person to sign for the parcel and (b) you will need to inform us that you are using a residential address so we can note that in the FedEx manifest to avoid additional charges.

If at all possible, please try to schedule your facilitation discussion to take place within the next six to eight weeks and please let me know the date of your facilitation meeting so the report can be sent at the appropriate time.

A Confidentiality Agreement form is also attached, and must be signed and sent back to Mandy Allen, either via e-mailed scan (msallen@ncsc.org) or hardcopy to: National Center for State Courts, Attn: Mandy Allen, 28524 Alessandria Circle, Bonita Springs, Florida 34135. Please refer to the Confidentiality Agreement for additional information.

Below is the contact information for your assigned evaluated judge.

>>>Judge Title / Name<<<

>>>Judge Address<<<

>>>Judge E-Mail<<<

>>>Judge Phone Number<<<

If you believe you will be able to conduct this facilitation, you should at this time prepare to contact the above-mentioned judge at your convenience. When you have scheduled an appointment with the judge, please also provide us with the date of the meeting for prompt mailing on our behalf. If there are any other questions or concerns, please contact either Mandy Allen at msallen@ncsc.org or 303-308-4312 (remote forwarded voice mail) or Nathan Jensen at njensen@IllinoisCourts.gov or 217-785-2125.

Thank you! We appreciate your assistance in furthering the Illinois JPE program with your efforts.

Sincerely,

Mandy Allen, Court Management Consultant
(on behalf of) Laurie K. Givens, Vice President

Sample E-Mail to Evaluated Judge Regarding Judge-Facilitator Meeting

NCSC – Scheduling of Your Upcoming Judicial Performance Evaluation Facilitation Meeting

Dear Judge [evaluated judge name],

The National Center for State Courts JPE project staff has assigned [facilitator name] to meet with you to discuss the results of your 2025 judicial performance evaluation. The match was made via random assignment and availability. Your assigned judicial facilitator should be contacting you soon to set up a meeting to discuss your evaluation results. Once a facilitation date has been scheduled, the NCSC will FedEx one copy of the evaluation report to you and one copy of the confidential report to your facilitator approximately **2 weeks** prior to your meeting. This 2-week timeframe may necessarily be shortened if we do not receive address information in a prompt manner. These will be the only copies of the reports printed and disseminated.

Prior to receiving these results, you are encouraged to review the Corrected Illinois Supreme Court Rule 58 and understand the rules regarding confidentiality of the evaluation proceedings thereunder. The goals and uses of the program are for self-improvement and the improvement of all judges. The confidentiality of all information arising during any evaluation is essential to the forthright participation by all judges and lawyers in the program. Confidentiality of information pertaining to any evaluation is not just for your benefit, but also for the benefit of the program and other participants in the program. Further, please understand that the confidentiality described in Rule 58 also prohibits you from sharing the results of your own evaluation, whether such results are perceived to be positive or negative. When you meet with your facilitator, you will be asked to sign a Notice of Confidentiality, which is then returned back to the NCSC.

If there are any conflicts of interest between you and your assigned judicial facilitator, please contact Mandy Allen (e-mail and phone number are listed below) as soon as possible so we can re-assign a more fitting facilitator. Please note that an alternate facilitator may also be assigned if the facilitator has any scheduling difficulties or does not respond to our communications in a timely fashion; we will keep you apprised of such a situation if the need arises. Below is the contact information for your assigned facilitator.

Name

Assignment

E-Mail Address

Phone

Please provide the best physical mailing address for the evaluation report. FedEx requires a signature for the release of secure documents, so if you provide a residential address, please consider that (a) you will likely need to be there in person to sign for the parcel and (b) you will need to inform us that you are using a residential address so we can note that in the FedEx manifest to avoid additional charges.

Your facilitator, or an alternate facilitator (if we are asked to reassign), should be contacting you soon. When you can, please also provide the date of the meeting (as soon as the date has been set) for prompt mailing on our behalf. If there are any other questions or concerns, please contact Mandy Allen at msallen@ncsc.org . If you have not heard from your facilitator within the next two (2) weeks, please notify me so that I may help the process move forward.

You also have an opportunity to evaluate yourself, by clicking on the following link: https://ncsc2.iad1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1Nhj9e4gNXdevKl. You may find it helpful to complete this confidential survey, which only you will have access to, so you can compare your own evaluation to that of your evaluation respondents. Please note that, if you do choose to complete this survey, you will need to print the results before exiting from the survey. If you do not do so, the information you provided will be lost. The NCSC does not maintain copies of these surveys.

Finally, I have included, as an attachment to this email, an *optional* personal biographical overview form that you may complete if you wish. If you choose to complete this form, it will be sent to your facilitator, so he/she has some basic background information about you and your experience as a judge. If completed, the form contains instructions on returning the document for inclusion with your evaluation report materials to your facilitator.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Mandy Allen, Court Management Consultant
(on behalf of) Laurie K. Givens, Vice President