

Fact Sheet on Judicial Education for Federally-Appointed Judges February 2020

- Canadians expect their judges to know the law, as well as to possess empathy and to recognize and question any past personal attitudes and sympathies that might prevent them from acting fairly.
- To meet those expectations, the Canadian Judicial Council ensures that judges continue to benefit from high-quality, effective, ongoing professional development opportunities.
- Beginning in the 1990s, the Canadian Judicial Council has required social context education in all its key programs to ensure judges - and in particular newly-appointed judges - are aware of the challenges faced by vulnerable groups in society.
- From January 2014 to December 2019, the National Judicial Institute has delivered 41 sessions on sexual assault law, the skills involved in sexual assault trials, and the context of witnesses in sexual assault cases. Some sessions were multi-day programs and some were a portion of a larger program. Some were national programs and some were delivered to specific provincial superior courts. In addition, another 15 sessions focussed on related issues such as domestic violence, human trafficking, victims' rights, and trauma-informed treatment.
- Beginning in 2018, judges in their second to fifth year on the bench are expected to take a five-day program on the law, skills, and social context of sexual assault cases. In each of 2019 and 2020, 60 federally-appointed judges from all across Canada completed the course. It will be offered annually.
- Seminars designed for new judges include sessions on ethics, impartiality, criminal law (including sexual assault law), civil trials, judgement writing, managing the courtroom, disability in the courtroom, the Charter, oral judgements, communications skills, family law, remedies, and evidence, all within a social context framework, as mandated by the Canadian Judicial Council since 2004.
- After attending the courses for new judges, judges are then expected to devote a minimum of ten days a year to judicial education.