



Alberta Court of Justice

Judicial Education Plan

2026-2029¹

The Alberta Court of Justice (the Court) fosters a culture of excellence and is committed to providing Justices and Justices of the Peace with opportunities to continually develop their expertise and skills throughout their careers. Each Justice and Justice of the Peace has a responsibility to identify their individual professional development needs and to select appropriate educational activities.

The Court established the Judicial Education Committee of the Chief Justice and Council (the Committee) in the fall of 2014 to formalize its commitment to professional development. The *Education Plan 2026-2029* establishes measurable, concrete goals for the next three fiscal years to ensure Justices and Justices of the Peace have access to the broadest possible range of educational opportunities.

The Court continuously monitors legal and societal developments and reviews the three-year plan annually, revising and refining it as needed to adjust the educational requirements for Justices and Justices of the Peace.

1.0. Areas of Judicial Education

1.1. The Education Plan is based on the four areas of judicial education established by the *2015-16 Judicial Education Framework*: substantive law, judicial skills, social context, and judicial development.

1.2. Substantive Law

1.2.1. Substantive law includes criminal, civil, family and youth matters, as well as evidence, administrative, and constitutional law and procedure. New Justices and Justices of the Peace are expected to develop expertise in all substantive law areas relevant to their judicial role. All Justices and Justices of the Peace require periodic review of concepts and procedures in areas they encounter less frequently and must remain current with developments in case law and legislation.

¹ This plan covers the fiscal years 2026-2027, 2027-2028, and 2028-2029.

1.3. **Judicial Skills**

1.3.1. Judicial skills include court communication and court management, working with self-represented and vexatious litigants, caseflow management, judgment writing and oral decisions, judicial dispute resolution, and technology proficiency. New Justices and Justices of the Peace can develop these skills through targeted seminars, shadowing, and mentoring opportunities. Those in their mid and late careers benefit from revisiting and refining their judicial craft and are encouraged to serve as educators and mentors for less experienced colleagues. Technology training, including training and awareness related to artificial intelligence tools and their ethical, procedural, and practical implications, must be readily available as new programs and devices are introduced in the Court. The pandemic accelerated technological change, particularly in the area of remote hearings, making it essential for Justices and Justices of the Peace to stay current with evolving tools and practices.

1.4. **Social Context**

1.4.1. Social context education enhances the understanding by Justices and Justices of the Peace of the parties appearing before the Court. It addresses issues such as cultural and ethnic diversity, Indigenous histories and teachings, Truth and Reconciliation recommendations, inclusion, unconscious bias, anti-racism, trauma-informed judging, mental health challenges, the unique needs of children and families, and addictions. Because knowledge and perspectives in these areas continue to evolve, regular updates are essential. Opportunities to discuss issues amongst peers and engagement with diverse communities can foster practical strategies to apply in court.

1.5. **Judicial Development**

1.5.1. Judicial development encompasses education, personal wellness, and a strong foundation in expected judicial conduct and ethics. It includes training for Justices and Justices of the Peace who are interested in or have recently assumed administrative roles within the Court, as well as those seeking to become mentors or educators. It also includes matters such as time and stress management, mental wellness, prevention or treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder, and retirement planning. Among other matters, judicial conduct and ethics encompass the topics of diligence, conflicts of interest, bias, courtroom demeanor, and impartiality. Experience shows that relevant educational programs and resources encourage Justices and Justices of the Peace to discuss and clarify personal and courtroom ethical dilemmas, as well as conduct and ethical issues arising from current trends such as social media, judicial resolution, and interaction with self-represented litigants.

2.0. Education for Justices and Justices of the Peace

2.1. Education Leave

- 2.1.1. Subject to the *French Program Policy*, the *New Justices Education Plan*, and the *New Justices of the Peace Education Plan*, full-time Justices and full-time Justices of the Peace are entitled to 10 days of education leave per calendar year, plus necessary travel time. Part-time Justices and Justices of the Peace are entitled to 5 days of education leave per calendar year, plus necessary travel time.
- 2.1.2. Full-time Justices and Justices of the Peace are expected to use four of these days to attend the conferences organized by the Alberta Provincial Justices' Association (APJA) and the Society of the Justices of the Peace in Alberta (SJPA). They are encouraged to use the remaining six days to participate in other educational programs of interest throughout the year. Part-time Justices, Supernumerary Justices and ad-hoc Justices of the Peace are also encouraged to attend the APJA/SJPA Conferences.
- 2.1.3. Full-time Justices and Justices of the Peace who do not attend an APJA/SJPA conference and are not scheduled to preside in court will be expected to utilize vacation time in lieu, subject to the discretion of the Assistant Chief Justices and Administrative Justices of the Peace.
- 2.1.4. Educational leave is subject to the approval and discretion of the Assistant Chief Justices and Administrative Justices of the Peace in consultation with the Chief Justice.
- 2.1.5. Occasionally, the Office of the Chief Justice will organize programs that do not require the use of educational leave.

2.2. Funding for Educational Programs

- 2.2.1. The Office of the Chief Justice funds some of the educational programs available to the Justices and Justices of the Peace. The APJA/SJPA conferences are partially financed through government grants to the Associations. For other educational expenses, Justices and Justices of the Peace may use their Professional Development Allowance, up to the permitted amount and in accordance with the *Provincial Court Judges and Masters in Chambers Compensation Regulation* (Alta Reg 176/1998), the *Justice of the Peace Regulation* (Alta Reg 6/1999) and the guidelines administered through the Office of the Chief Justice.

2.3. Individual Learning Goals

- 2.3.1. Justices and Justices of the Peace should create annual learning goals, select appropriate programs, schedule time, and obtain approval for these programs. Goals

may include serving as educators or presenters at internal and external law conferences or participating in relevant public forums on law and justice. New Justices and Justices of the Peace are required to establish five-year individual education plans.

2.4. Education Plans

- 2.4.1. The [New Justices Education Plan](#) sets the framework for education of new Justices during their first five years on the bench. New Justices are encouraged to participate in as many educational initiatives as possible.
- 2.4.2. The [New Justices of the Peace Education Plan](#) sets the framework for education of new Justices of the Peace during their first five years on the bench. New Justices of the Peace are encouraged to participate in as many educational initiatives as possible.

3.0. Guiding Principles for 2026-2029

- 3.1. The Committee and Manager of Judicial Education & Communications will:
 - 3.1.1. Work with the APJA and SJPJA to complement the educational initiatives organized by the Associations.
 - 3.1.2. Continue building relationships and partnerships with the National Judicial Institute (NJI) and other courts to support educational initiatives.
 - 3.1.3. Maximize financial and educational benefits by organizing activities within Alberta whenever possible.
 - 3.1.4. Deliver educational programs in a variety of formats and structures to accommodate different learning styles.
 - 3.1.5. Promote online learning opportunities when appropriate.
 - 3.1.6. Ensure equitable access to education for all Justices and Justices of the Peace across the province.
 - 3.1.7. Encourage Justices to sit in various locations and divisions, including specialized courts, to promote consistency and exchange of ideas.
 - 3.1.8. Involve Justices and Justices of the Peace as faculty when organizing educational activities whenever possible. Engage external experts when appropriate to provide scholarly perspectives or supplement the Court's view.
 - 3.1.9. Work with Justices assigned to preside in specialized courts to identify best practices and procedures and develop related educational opportunities.

- 3.1.10. Respond promptly and appropriately to public and media inquiries regarding the Court's education initiatives.

4.0. Education Initiatives for 2026-2029

- 4.1. The Committee will provide education on all areas of judicial learning outlined above through one-day sessions, lunch and learn programs, and collaborations with other associations and/or provinces.
- 4.2. The Committee will collaborate with the APJA and SJPA Education Committees, through their Chairs or designates, to identify educational topics and speakers for spring and fall conferences.
- 4.3. The Committee will continue to promote external judicial education opportunities and encourage Justices and Justices of the Peace to establish annual personal plans, taking advantage of courses available in the four areas of judicial education according to their interests and needs.
- 4.4. The Committee will continue to support mentors of new Justices and Justices of the Peace in their roles.
- 4.5. The Committee will continue to develop regular programs for new Justices and Justices of the Peace.
- 4.6. As part of the *New Justices Education Plan*, the Committee will maintain and evaluate an orientation program for new Justices.
- 4.7. As part of the *New Justices of the Peace Education Plan*, the Committee will maintain and evaluate an orientation program for new Justices of the Peace.
- 4.8. The Committee will make recommendations and assist the Chief and Council Committee in maintaining the New Administrative Justices Education Plan.
- 4.9. The Manager of Judicial Education & Communications will continue to work with education chairs and presenters and update documentation on best practices in facilitation.
- 4.10. The Committee will promote the collection, consolidation, and updating of existing Bench Books, which are available on the internal Judicial Education webpage.

5.0. Educational Resources Available to Justices and Justices of the Peace

- 5.1. The following resources support the educational goals of the Justices and Justices of the Peace.
- 5.2. ***Manager of Judicial Education & Communications***
 - 5.2.1. The Manager of Judicial Education & Communications serves as the Court's primary staff resource for promoting education and assisting Justices and Justices of the

Peace in selecting professional development activities. Responsibilities include organizing, promoting, and broadcasting educational events such as APJA/SJPA conferences, programs for new Justices, and in-house sessions. The Manager also explores new opportunities and communicates updates through email or a quarterly newsletter.

5.3. **Internal Judicial Education Webpage**

5.3.1. Maintained by the Manager of Judicial Education & Communications, this webpage provides access to educational tools and documentation, including:

- An inventory of learning opportunities
- In-house Bench Books and checklists
- Case and legislative summaries
- Materials and recordings from in-house presentations
- Materials from the APJA and SJPA conferences
- Quarterly *Education Matters* newsletters highlighting opportunities, news, and developments

5.4. **Legal Counsel and Articling Students**

5.4.1. The Court's Legal Counsel and articling students assist the judiciary with their education needs by preparing case summaries, supporting lunch and learn presentations, conducting legal research, preparing memos, and providing legal opinions.

5.5. **Library Services**

5.5.1. The library offers database and research training and recommends textbook purchases. Services include:

- Administering database information and passwords
- Distributing annual copies of the *Criminal Code* and the *Rules of Court* if ordered (full-time Justices of the Peace can choose to receive *Carswell's Alberta Provincial Offences* instead of a *Criminal Code*)
- Providing training to Justices and Justices of the Peace on the use of legal databases

5.6. **Court Technology Services**

5.6.1. Court Technology Services assist Justices and Justices of the Peace in the development of their computer skills through:

- Ongoing training in Microsoft 365
- Assistance with Dragon, VPN and FTR

5.7. ***National Judicial Institute (NJI) Website***

5.7.1. The NJI website provides access to:

- Program materials from past seminars
- NJI Bench Books
- Subject collections
- New Judges Resource Page
- Sexual Assault Trial Videos
- Podcasts and webinars
- Note-taking template
- NJI Criminal and Family newsletters

6.0. Review of the Plan

6.1. This plan will be reviewed and evaluated annually at the end of each fiscal year.