



## Committee on Judicial Ethics

### Annual Report for January 1 - December 31, 2019

**Membership and Terms.** The Committee on Judicial Ethics, which began operating on August 1, 2008, continued its work throughout the 2019 calendar year. The membership remained constant during the first seven months of the year, consisting of the following members: Honorable James T. Graham (Chair); Professor Sarah F. Russell; Hon. Robert B. Shapiro; Honorable Michael P. Kamp; Vernon D. Oliver; and Honorable Karen A. Goodrow (Alternate). Upon the expiration of Professor Russell’s term, the Chief Justice appointed Professor Carolyn W. Kaas to a three year term effective August 1, 2019 through July 31, 2022. Attorneys Joseph J. Del Ciampo, Martin R. Libbin, Viviana L. Livesay and Adam P. Mauriello continued to serve as staff to the committee. The current terms of the members are as follows:

Hon. James T. Graham (Chair)	August 1, 2018 to July 31, 2020
Hon. Michael P. Kamp	August 1, 2018 to July 31, 2020
Hon. Vernon D. Oliver	August 1, 2018 to July 31, 2020
Hon. Karen A. Goodrow (Alternate)	August 1, 2018 to July 31, 2020
Hon. Robert B. Shapiro	August 1, 2018, to July 31, 2021
Prof. Carolyn W. Kaas	August 1, 2019 to July 31, 2022

**Policy and Rules.** No policy or rule changes took place during 2019.

**Committee Webpage.** No substantial changes were made to the webpage during 2019. Notice of all meetings, agendas and minutes continued to be made available on the Committee’s website, as well as on the “State Agency Public Meeting Calendar” website portal found at: <https://egov.ct.gov/pmc>.

**Activity.** During 2019, the Committee met via teleconference four (4) times to discuss pending inquiries. The Committee received four (4) requests for advisory opinions and no requests for emergency staff opinions. All four advisory opinions involved off-the-bench activities and concerned the following issues: serving on the board or various committees of a community organization that provides research and funding to improve the lives of a specific gender by unlocking the potential of their families and communities ([2019-01](#)); receiving an

award at a gala event, which includes a silent auction, buffet dinner and awards ceremony, sponsored by a statewide religious organization ([2019-02](#)); playing a scripted role of a fictional judge in an upcoming movie ([2019-03](#)); and joining a local bar association in the locality in which a Judicial Official works or lives ([2019-04](#)).

The Committee observed that the subjects of inquiries during 2019, as in the previous years, revealed that Judicial Officials continue to pay close attention to the growing body of formal and informal opinions. Although some seek clarification or expansion of matters covered in past opinions, Judicial Officials, for the most part, do not ask about matters that were prevalent in prior years. Rather, they appear to rely on past opinions to guide their conduct. The requests during 2019 continue to consist of increasingly nuanced and current subjects, reflecting heightened sensitivity toward maintaining ethical conduct. Groups of new judges will continue to receive training in order to make them aware of the Committee's work and to encourage them to submit inquiries pertaining to the transitional stage as well as throughout their careers.

The Committee, which has now completed eleven and a half years of service, is encouraged that Judicial Officials appear to be actively using our services and benefitting from access to the summaries of Informal and Formal opinions and the cross-referenced Subject Matter Index, as well as the minutes of Committee meetings. While encouraging Judicial Officials to consult the webpage regularly, the Committee continues to urge that Judicial Officials should not hesitate to present inquiries whenever they have concerns, regardless of the subject matter or the complexity of the issue or whether the particular subject may have been addressed in some respects previously. Ethics inquiries are highly fact-specific and even issues that have been addressed before may present new concerns.

The Committee is prepared to use the "Ethics Alert" feature of the webpage whenever necessary to increase the likelihood that advisory opinions on crucial matters of broad interest will come to the attention of Judicial Officials. All Committee members continue to receive monthly updates from Cynthia Gray, the ethics director of the National Center for State Courts, Center for Judicial Ethics.

The members of the Committee join in thanking and commending staff for their excellent and prompt professional assistance in the work of the Committee.

**Recommendations.** The Committee again recommends that ethics components be included on a regular basis in the CJI program. The Committee also welcomes suggestions as to how it can further improve its website to insure effective access to the growing body of ethical opinions.

**Conclusion.** The Committee is dedicated to providing accurate, timely, and effective ethics opinions for the guidance of Judicial Officials while also maximizing the privacy of Judicial Officials who submit requests.

Respectfully submitted,

James T. Graham, Chair  
January 16, 2020