Evaluating Access and Fairness in the Travis County Civil Courts

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Abstract

Public trust and confidence in the courts has been a concern in the United States since the inception of our system of government. In the past, court improvement focused on the needs of the judges and courts rather than on the needs of the citizens served by the courts. That focus changed when the National Center for State Courts created the Trial Court Performance Standards which include five performance areas: (1) Access to Justice, (2) Expedition and Timeliness, (3) Equality, Fairness and Integrity, (4) Independence and Accountability, and (5) Public Trust and Confidence. The original system has 68 measures including access and fairness. CourTools was created to facilitate the ability of individual courts in the measurement process.

The Travis County Civil Courts are located in Central Texas and specialize in civil and family law matters. A total of 15 civil judges serve a population of over 1,026,000 citizens. The focus of this project was to measure the opinions of our court customers about their perceptions of access and fairness. This was accomplished by surveying the court customers, using the CourTools survey instrument developed by the National Center for State Courts.

The CourTools survey was randomly distributed to courthouse users over a two-week period from October 25, 2010, to November 5, 2010. A total of 419 usable surveys were completed. With a courthouse population of 339,260, this sample size allowed for a confidence level of 95.93 percent and an accuracy rate of +/-5 percent. Each survey question was rated on one of the following: strongly disagree; disagree; neutral; agree; strongly agree; or not applicable. The data was compiled and grouped into negative, neutral or positive categories. Strongly agree and agree were combined into positive responses and strongly disagree and
disagree were combined into negative responses. Blanks, or not applicable responses, were not included. The judicial leadership of the Civil Courts, the Local Administrative Judge and Presiding Judge, were consulted to obtain approval for conducting the survey. Additionally, their positive buy-in on the project thwarted any complaints about using county employees and resources for the project. Since this survey had never been conducted in Travis County, the Civil Courts set a positive response rate of at least 80 percent for each question. A 90 percent positive response rate seemed unrealistic and a 70 percent positive response rate, in the average range, did not seem to be a lofty goal for a project of this caliber.

The overall results of the survey ranged from very good to less than satisfactory. Of the ten questions relating to access, three questions reached above the 80 percent positive target rating, five questions received a positive response rate in the 70 percent range and two questions received a positive rating below 70 percent.

There were several areas of excellent performance. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents felt safe in the courthouse and eighty-five thought the courthouse was easy to find. The courts should continue efforts to provide easy access and a safe environment by working closely with Facilities Management to keep signage updated when changes are made in the Courthouse and continue to work with the Sheriff's Office on having a security presence, not only at the security screening stations at the two entrances/exits of the Courthouse, but by having roaming deputies patrol the courtrooms, hallways and public waiting areas in the HMS Courthouse. Eighty-three percent of the respondents felt they were treated with courtesy and respect. The courts have made a concerted effort to provide staff with appropriate training and should continue to do so.
Areas for improvement were also identified in the access findings. Only sixty-four percent of the respondents felt the website was useful. The content of the court’s website should be reviewed on a regular basis by the Courts Technology Team as well as administrative management and updated as needed. A survey could be posted on the website asking the court customers for suggestions for improvement and court management and the Court Technology Team should review the responses and make a proposal in the next budget cycle for website improvements based on the needs of the court community.

None of the fairness questions reached the 80 percent positive response rate target and indicated the public does not always perceive the courts as being fair. Even though the survey results were much lower than anticipated, the findings will play an educational role in alerting the Civil Judges on how they are viewed by both insiders and the public and will lay the groundwork for future improvements.

The Travis County Courts are committed to providing access to justice and fair judicial process to the citizens of Travis County. Conducting this survey has provided valuable information. Areas of strengths and weakness have been identified so that the Courts can now take performance-improving action. To ensure that plans and efforts for improvement are successful, the survey will be conducted on an annual basis.
Introduction

State of Texas Court System

The current structure of the court system of the State of Texas consists of the Supreme Court, the Court of Criminal Appeals, the intermediate courts of appeals called the "Courts of Appeals", the state trials courts called "District Courts", county-level courts, justice courts and municipal courts. (Office of Court Administration, 2009, p. 2) The Texas Supreme Court is the highest state appellate court for civil matters and the Court of Criminal Appeals is the highest state appellate court for criminal matters. The 14 Courts of Appeals are the state intermediate appellate courts with jurisdiction in both civil and criminal cases. (See Appendix A)

The primary trial courts in Texas where "witnesses are heard, testimony is received, exhibits are offered into evidence, and a verdict is rendered" are the district courts. (Office of Court Administration, 2009, p. 6) The majority of district courts have both criminal and civil jurisdiction, however, in the large metropolitan cities; the district courts specialize in civil, criminal or family law matters. (Office of Court Administration, 2009, p. 7)

Travis County Civil Courts

Travis County encompasses 989.30 square miles (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009, p. 2) and is located in the state capitol of Austin, Texas. It is a metropolitan city located in the center of the state, and is 80 miles north of San Antonio and 220 miles south of Dallas. It is also home to the University of Texas at Austin. The Travis County Civil District Courts specialize in civil and family law matters and serve over 1,026,000 constituents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009, p. 1) with an average population of more than 58,000 per district court in 2009. (Office of Court Administration, 2009, p. 42)
There are 10 civil district court judges and 3 civil associate judge positions. The Texas Legislature authorized the appointment of associate judges to assist the district court judges in family law matters. (Office of Court Administration, 2009, p. 8) The 3 civil associate judge positions in Travis County are appointed by the local district judges, with the consent of Commissioners’ Court, and are county funded positions that handle family law cases. The Travis County Civil Courts currently reside in an 80-year-old courthouse facility in downtown Austin near the State Capitol Building. The Heman Marion Sweatt Courthouse (HMS) is a six-story building with courts located on five floors and an unused jail on the top floor. In addition to courtrooms and judicial chambers for the 10 Civil District Courts and 3 Associate Judge Courts, the building offices the Civil County Courts at Law, Probate Court, Justice of the Peace Court, Precinct 5, the District and County Clerk Offices, as well as the Legal Self-Help Center which is under the umbrella of the Travis County Law Library.

Project Purpose

Providing excellent court services is a primary goal of the Travis County District Courts as detailed in our Strategic Plan (Travis County Civil Courts). Drawing on a tenet of quality management, courts should not only meet, but exceed customer expectations. This can be accomplished by courts listening to feedback from their customers. The focus of this project was to measure and assess the opinions of our customers about their perceptions of access and fairness in the Civil District Courts with a special focus on our website users and the Legal Self-Help Center users.

This was accomplished by using CourTools developed by the National Center for State Courts. The CourTools survey targeted the public’s perception of access to our court system, as
well as how our court users are treated by the courts. We also collected and compared data on
demographic components such as gender, ethnicity and primary language to find out if there
were any challenges that needed addressed due to our diverse population in central Texas. There
were no known issues. However, the Civil Courts wanted to identify where improvements could
be made from the court users' perspective. Additionally, we are in the planning stages for a new
civil and family courthouse. The findings from the survey will be helpful in ensuring we address
any access issues noted by our court customers that relate to the courthouse facility.

The remainder of this paper includes a review of the important concepts, findings and
research methods identified in the literature about public opinion surveys and court improvement
methods that relate to access and fairness. The methodology section describes the data collection
steps as well as the research methods and the findings portion provides an overview of the survey
findings and results. Finally, the conclusions and recommendations summarize the meaning and
significance of the survey findings.

**Literature Review**

Public trust and confidence in the courts has been a concern since the inception of our
system of government. Since Article III of the Constitution and the Judiciary Act of 1789
established federal courts in a new nation that was somewhat skeptical of the concept, the Courts
have required public support and acceptance in order to be strong and effective institutions.
(Rottman & Tomkins, 1999, p. 24) Roscoe Pound, in his landmark address to the American Bar
Association in 1906 proclaimed that “Dissatisfaction with the administration of justice is as old
as law.” (Pound, 1906, p. 1) According to Pound, there will always be dissatisfied customers of
the courts due to the nature of the American legal system, but there is ample room for
improvement. (Pound, 1906, p. 19)
Historical Basis - Court Public Opinion Surveys

Over a century later, we are still trying to determine the public’s level of confidence and trust in our court system. Unlike in 1906, however, we now have public opinion surveys to help us clarify the causes of popular dissatisfaction. (Warren, 2000, p. 1) Public opinion surveys can be a useful tool in providing valuable information on the concerns, expectations and preferences of the public. Surveys can play an educational role in alerting judges on how courts are viewed by both insiders and the public in general. (Rottman & Tomkins, 1999, p. 31)

The first comprehensive national survey of public attitude toward courts and justice, called “The Public Image of the Courts” was commissioned in 1977 by the National Center for States and conducted by Yankelovich, Skelly, and White, Inc. A seven-member advisory task force helped draft a consumer-oriented survey that was given face-to-face to 1,931 Americans to find out their opinion about the performance of the courts and whether the public’s views were based on their knowledge and experience with the court system. (Yankelovich, 1978, p. i) This survey provided a wealth of data on the attitudes of the public toward the administration of justice (Mahoney, Sarat, & Weller, 1978, p. 1) and showed a wide gap in perceptions of the role and functions of the Courts between the public and the three leadership entities (judges, lawyers and community leaders). (Mahoney, Sarat, & Weller, 1978, p. 3)

The next year at the National Conference on the State Judiciary in Williamsburg, Virginia, a report was prepared especially for discussion and presentation based on the following six conclusions of the 1977 survey:

1) There was a profound difference in the view of the courts between the general public and community leaders, as opposed to those of the judges and lawyers.
2) The general public and community leaders were dissatisfied with the performance of the courts and ranked courts lower than many other major American institutions.

3) The general public’s knowledge and direct experience with the courts was low.

4) Those with knowledge and experience with the courts had the greatest dissatisfaction with the courts.

5) Despite the limited knowledge and its dissatisfaction with the courts, the interest of the general public in the courts was high and there was support for its reform and improvement.

6) The attitudes of the general public on crime and punishment were more complex than previous studies had indicated. (Yankelovich, 1978, p. ii)

Interestingly enough, when many of the same survey questions were asked of 300 judges at the conference, the judges did not see any specific areas the courts needed to improve or any urgent need for reform. (Rottman & Tomkins, 1999, pp. 24-25) The next 20 years saw an increased interest by the court community in the subject of public trust and confidence. By 1998, twenty-one states had conducted twenty-three surveys (See Figure 1) assessing the public’s perception. Most of these surveys were sponsored by each state’s judiciary and focused on public trust and confidence.

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(Rottman, 1998, pp. 17 - 18)

In Texas, the Office of Court Administration and State Bar of Texas conducted a survey of 1,215 Texans in December 1998 to obtain baseline information in response to the growing national concern about public support and respect for the court system and the legal profession. (Texas Office of Court Administration and State Bar of Texas, 1998, pp. 3 - 4) Overall, the respondents had a positive perception of the Texas court system but there were concerns about:

- Fairness and equality in the courts.
- Excessive court costs and filing fees.
- Clarity of court procedures.
- Protection of society from criminals.
- Victims’ rights. (Texas Office of Court Administration and State Bar of Texas, 1998, p. 15)

Additionally, the survey results showed that disparities existed between the different segments of the Texas population (e.g., Caucasians, African-Americans and Hispanics) on how they viewed the courts. (Texas Office of Court Administration and State Bar of Texas, 1998, p. 2) African-Americans had the lowest degree of confidence in the courts and Hispanics had the highest degree of confidence. (Texas Office of Court Administration and State Bar of Texas, 1998, p. 19)

On a national level, the American Bar Association sponsored a survey, “Perceptions of the U.S. Justice System” in August 1998 and interviewed 1,000 adults. (American Bar Association, 1999, p. 6) Contrary to the findings of the 1978 Yankelovich study, the ABA national survey found that the more knowledge people have about the justice system, the greater
their confidence in the system. Also, people with positive court experiences had more confidence in the courts. (American Bar Association, 1999, p. 8) Other interesting findings were that the level of confidence in the courts over the past 20 years --- U.S. Supreme Court, federal, state and local courts --- all increased significantly since 1978 and that public confidence in the Courts was higher, relative to other major institutions. (American Bar Association, 1999, p. 7) The results of the national and state surveys conducted between 1977 and 1998 consistently painted a portrait of the public’s perceptions of the courts. The positive perceptions were:

- Judges are honest and fair in the case decisions and are well trained.
- The American jury system works well.
- Judges and court personnel treat members of the public with courtesy and respect.

The negative perceptions were:

- Perceived inaccessibility.
- Unfairness in the treatment of racial and ethnic minorities.
- Leniency toward criminals.
- Lack of concern about the problems of ordinary people. (Rottman & Tomkins, 1999, p. 25)

Another national survey in 1999, called “How the Public Views the State Courts”, was initiated by Chief Justice Thomas Phillips of Texas, acting as President of the Conferences of Chief Justices, to look at the public perceptions of the courts in their community in a study funded by the Hearst Foundation Corporation. (National Center for State Courts, 1999, p. 2) One of the objectives of this survey, also referred to as the “1999 National Survey”, was to
determine the American public’s perception about their state and local courts in the following areas:

- Access to Justice
- Timeliness
- Fairness and Equality
- Independence and Accountability (National Center for State Courts, 1999, p. 10)

An important finding of the 1999 National Survey was that the perception of the court system varies by the person’s social group. (Rottman & Tomkins, 1999, p. 3) That is, 50 percent of all respondents believed African-Americans and Hispanics were treated worse than other ethnic groups. (National Center for State Courts, 1999, p. 37) Additionally, a majority of Americans believed that non-English speaking people received worse treatment from the courts. (National Center for State Courts, 1999, p. 39) In 1999, at the National Conference on Public Trust and Confidence in the Justice System, 500 attendees consisting of state chief justices, administrators, attorneys, the press and general public, met in Washington, D.C. From this conference emerged a national guide, referred to as the National Action Plan (NAP), to improve the public’s trust and confidence in the courts. (National Center for State Courts, 2000, p. 4).

The most effective strategies to accomplish this were identified as follows:

- Improve education and training;
- Make the courts more inclusive and outreaching;
- Improve external communication;
- Swift, fair justice; resolve cases with reasonable promptness/cost;
• Share programs and activities among the states that have been used to improve public trust and confidence; and

• Implement recommendations of gender, race and ethnic bias task forces and replicate the successes of other jurisdictions. (Leben, 1999, p. 5)

Court Improvement Methods

In the past, court improvement focused on the needs of the judges and courts rather than on the needs of the citizens served by the court. (Murphy, 1997, p. 1) That focus changed in 1987, when the National Center for State Courts and the Bureau of Justice Affairs developed the Trial Court Performance Standards and Measurement System which provided a framework for courts to focus on self-assessment and self-improvement. (Murphy, 1997, p. iii) After ten years of testing and development, sixty-eight performance measures were grouped into 22 standard categories and became known as the Trial Court Performance Standards (TCPS) with five main categories for performance as follows:

1. Access to Justice
2. Expedition and Timeliness
3. Equality, Fairness and Integrity
4. Independence and Accountability
5. Public Trust and Confidence (Murphy, 1997, p. 3)

The benchmark for improvement using these measures was not comparing each court’s data with other courts, but comparing the data for the same court over time. Unfortunately, these measures were cumbersome to implement and it was difficult for courts to gather data on a systematic basis to compare against the original benchmark, especially for courts that were small
and/or had limited resources. (California Judicial Council, 1998, pp. 5-6) Therefore, the measures were streamlined. Some were modified and others were combined to produce a set of small but powerful measures that were easily implemented and, most importantly, not costly to duplicate which would allow courts to produce useful data while supporting timely and performance-improving decisions. (California Judicial Council, 1998, pp. 6-8)

The National Center for State Courts developed CourTools by integrating the major performance areas of TCPS with successful measurements from the public and private sector (Hewitt, Ostrom, & Schaufler, 2006) into 10 vital indicators of court performance as listed in Figure 2. (National Center for State Courts, 2006) The design criteria for the CourTools were as follows:

- be few in number;
- be feasible and practical for day-to-day management;
- focus on outcome; and
- to reflect important aspects of the fundamental mission vision of the courts. (Hewitt, Ostrom, & Schaufler, p. 95)

CourTools identifies five benefits to assessing court performance:

1. Tests the Court's assumptions and perceptions on how well things are going;
2. Identifies what is most important to the court users so the Courts can focus its efforts on those areas;
3. Fosters creativity among staff to find new and different ways to reach Court goals;

Figure 2: List of CourTools Measures

1. Access and Fairness
2. Clearance Rates
3. Time to Disposition
4. Age of Active Pending Caseload
5. Trial Date Certainty
6. Reliability and Integrity of Case Files
7. Collection of Monetary Penalties
8. Effective Use of Jurors
9. Court Employee Satisfaction
10. Cost per Case
4. Provides justification for budget requests; and

5. Demonstrates to the taxpayer the value of court services. (Hewitt, Ostrom, & Schauffler, 2006, p. 96)

Concept of Fairness

Courts that are predictable in the management of cases, regardless of the parties involved, are viewed by the public as being fair. It is a common misconception that what matters most to citizens when dealing with the courts is whether they win or lose their case. (Casper, Tyler, & Fisher, p. 138) Research shows that positive perceptions of court experience are shaped more by court users’ perception of how they were treated in court. That is, whether the judge and court personnel treat them with courtesy and respect and by whether the court’s process of making decisions seems fair. (Rottman & Tomkins, 1999, p. 25) This does not mean that court participants are happy to lose their case; however, they are more willing to accept the decision of a judge when the decision seems to have been made fairly. In short, procedural fairness is the primary factor that shapes perceptions of the judicial system.

Even courthouse staff such as the janitorial crew and court deputies at the security screening stations can affect the public’s experience of the courts, but judges uniquely shape public perceptions due to their respected position in the court system. (Burke & Leben, 2007, p. 9)

Research shows that public dissatisfaction can be addressed by judges paying careful attention to the four key elements of procedural fairness: voice, neutrality, respectful treatment, and engendering trust in authorities. (Burke & Leben, 2007, p. 3)

Tom Tyler, a psychology professor who is a prominent researcher in this area, defines the four expectations for procedural fairness as follows:
- **Voice** - The ability to participate in the case by expressing their viewpoint;

- **Neutrality** - Consistently applied legal principles, unbiased decision makers, and a "transparency" about how decisions are made;

- **Respectful Treatment** - Individuals are treated with dignity and their rights are obviously protected; and

- **Trustworthy Authorities** - Authorities are benevolent, caring, and sincerely trying to help the litigants - this trust is garnered by listening to individuals and by explaining or justifying decisions that address the litigants' needs. (Burke & Leben, 2007, p. 6)

The Travis County Civil Judges have done well in the past on judicial polls on fairness and understand that everyone who comes through the court system has a right to be treated with respect, a right to be listened to during the process, and a right to have important rulings in the proceedings explained so they can understand what is happening. Additionally, the judges have been very vocal over the last several years about the need for a new civil courthouse and have made efforts to better educate the community and eliminate any misinformation about the important role of the judicial system in the Travis County community.

*Concept of Access*

Having access to the courts means they are open to the public and are easily available to everyone. According to the *National Center for State Courts Strategic Plan 2009-2012*, "many courts have engaged in self-assessment to address public concerns about access, including openness of proceedings, effective citizen participation, respect and courtesy shown to citizens, financial barriers to access, and access for physically, mentally, and linguistically challenged
persons.” (p. 14) Enhancing access to all citizens is a high priority in Travis County. For example, the Law Library, under the guidance of the Civil District Judges, set up a legal self-help program to assist people in navigating the Courts without an attorney in uncontested family law matters. The assistance provided includes:

- Form packets in English and Spanish to assist the self-represented to find and complete the correct forms;
- Access to law books;
- On-site staff to guide the self-represented to the right materials;
- Assistance by an attorney located at the courthouse who is employed by the Law Library to help self-represented individuals identify the proper forms and help them complete the forms but not represent them in a lawyer-client relationship; and
- Provide website links to computer-based programs that assist self-represented individuals with completing forms.

These types of programs make the court process more understandable and more accepted by self-represented litigants. Evaluations from individuals using this program have been very positive in terms of customer satisfaction and the judges have seen improved results in the courtrooms. Another focus in Travis County has been to enhance information and assistance to our court users through the use of technology. Technology can promote the highest quality of justice by improving accessibility if the Courts are conscious of the fact that the Courts serve individuals who may not be able to afford a computer to access the technology.
Before the Travis County Civil Courts can determine where any improvement in court performance is needed, however, we must first assess citizen perception. Conducting this survey is a way to confirm that the Travis County judiciary is meeting the needs of its customers and to make improvements based on any identified deficiencies.

Methods

Survey Instrument

Other than individual courts asking jurors to complete a questionnaire about their experience at the conclusion of a jury trial, a comprehensive survey had never been conducted by the Travis County Civil Courts assessing the opinions of court users. When approached by the Director of Court Management about this CEDP project idea, the Civil Court judicial leadership expressed an interest in knowing the general public’s opinion for their collective courts.

The National Center for State Courts (NCSC) CourTools and its related survey was used as the model for this project. (National Center for State Courts, 2005) The benefit to using the National Center’s survey is that the questions, developed by a team of professionals with extensive credentials and experience, are easy to understand and the wording is concise. Additionally, the questions have been pretested and validated. The CourTools survey uses a five-point Likert scale that has the following categories: “Strongly Disagree”, “Disagree”, “Neutral”, “Agree”, “Strongly Agree” and a sixth option of “Not Applicable”.

NCSC’s CourtTools survey was modified slightly for our purposes. The phrase “judicial officer” was changed to “Judge” in the instructions based on the common usage of the term in our county. Also, since the Heman Marion Sweatt Courthouse also houses courts not affiliated with the Civil Courts such as Justice of the Peace and Probate Court, the responses to the
question, "What type of case brought you to the courthouse today?" were revised to be applicable to cases only heard in the Civil Courts and we added the question, "Where did you conduct business today?" to help us differentiate between court users coming to the HMS Courthouse to visit other Courts so that we would be evaluating only those survey responses applicable to the Civil Courts.

Additionally, two background questions, "What is your primary language?" and "Are you represented by an attorney today?" were added to give us other demographic variables to consider. The survey was made available during the survey period in both English and Spanish. To give our customers the opportunity to address their own particular concerns, we asked several opened ended questions for our website users and Legal Self Help Center users to help us to improve the services we provide in these areas and to improve future public opinion surveys. Even though NSCS had previously tested this survey document, pre-testing was done on courthouse staff, court patrons, attorneys, and family members due to the modifications made to the original NCSC document.

Judicial Leadership Approval

The Local Administrative Judge and the Presiding Judge of the Civil District Courts were consulted (See Appendix B) to receive judicial buy-in and approval of the survey. The scope of the project, the survey process and the resources that would be needed to make this project successful were discussed with both leadership judges in a one-on-one conversation with the Court Director. Both judges agreed to the parameters of the project and were supportive of the need to use court staff to conduct the survey. Additionally, advance notice was given to all 15 civil judges along with a preview of the survey questions (See Appendix C) as well as all Civil
Court employees. Other elected officials in the HMS Courthouse were also advised of the survey and asked if they wished to receive a copy of the results.

The National Center for State courts suggests in its CourTools literature that an 80 percent approval rating on each item is a high-end performance goal. In general, the National Center suggests that scoring between 70 and 80 percent is satisfactory and scoring below 70 percent suggests the need for improvement. Additionally, it is not realistic that a court will ever be a 100 percent performer. This rating scale suggested by the National Center was based on the review of the results from early courts that conducted this measure such as Maricopa Superior Court in Arizona and the 4th Judicial District Court in Hennipin County, Minnesota, as well as discussions held by the Center with other court managers. An organization sets a benchmark to improve and where the benchmark is initially set depends upon the starting place. Since this survey had never been conducted in Travis County and there was no baseline data on access and fairness, the Civil Courts set an artificial goal of 80 percent positive responses (combining “strongly agree” and “agree”) overall and for each individual demographic group as the desired benchmark for each question on the survey.

Since the Travis County Civil Courts have a master calendar docketing system with various dockets scheduled over a two-week period, we did not have a “typical day” to administer our survey at the courthouse. Therefore, we decided to conduct the paper survey during a typical two-week period beginning Monday, October 25, 2010, through Friday, November 5, 2010, which would allow individuals who experience all of our various dockets the opportunity to participate in the survey process.
Survey Team

Office staff from the District Judges’ Office, an employee from the information booth and a substitute bailiff volunteered to administer the survey from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. during the two-week period identified. On October 21, 2010, an orientation and training session was held for the individuals who volunteered to administer the survey. (See Appendix D) During the orientation, the purpose of the project was reviewed, instructions on how to conduct the survey were discussed, and a script was distributed on how to approach a court patron along with a list of common objections they might encounter. (See Appendix E) To ensure anonymity, the volunteers were told to ask each respondent to place their completed survey in a sealed, aluminum ballot box that was borrowed from the archives of the Travis County Elections Division.

Data Collection

The most random and economical method of distribution of the surveys was at the two courthouse entrances/exits of the Heman Marion Sweatt (HMS) Courthouse. The HMS Courthouse has two entrances/exits located on the west and east sides of the building on the first floor. People were asked to fill out a brief self-administered survey as he or she exited the courthouse rating their level of agreement with each question. This methodology provided us with an efficient method to get the survey to our customers as well as unbiased responses since only individuals willing to stop and complete the questionnaire participated rather than having the judges’ request that participants involved in court proceedings complete a survey at the conclusion of a hearing or trial. In this way, we hoped to avoid an inadequate response rate and a non-representative sample.
Signs, in both English and Spanish, were posted throughout the Courthouse before and during the survey collection weeks that said “You Be the Judge” and “Make Your Opinion Count!” (See Appendix F) encouraging court users to participate. To attract people’s attention to the surveyors, two tables with brightly colored helium balloons attached, were placed in the center of the first floor of the courthouse between the two entrances/exits. Volunteer staff had clip boards set up with the surveys attached and encouraged passersby to complete the survey and deposit them directly into the sealed ballot box. Court patrons were offered the option of keeping the blue pen they used to take the survey which included the name and logo of the Travis County Civil Courts as well as the court’s website address. (See Appendix G) As an added incentive to complete the survey, individually wrapped hard candy was available to the public at the survey tables on the first floor of the courthouse. We also placed the survey on our website to capture the opinions of our users who may not physically come to the courthouse but instead use our online services to conduct their business with the courts.

Survey Population and Sample Size

For our survey, individuals exiting the courthouse facility were randomly selected and asked to participate. Every third person leaving the courthouse was stopped by a survey team member and invited to take the brief survey. The number of responses received determined the degree of accuracy and margin of error of the interpreted data. A total of 419 usable surveys were completed and entered into a database. When taken as a whole, this sample size yielded a confidence level of 95.93 percent and an error rate of +/- 5 percent. (Raosoft, Inc., 2004) Subsets of this data would have a lower confidence level and or higher error rate due to the smaller sample size.
Compilation of Data

Each survey response was entered into a database using the Confrmit survey tool link as suggested by the staff at the National Center for State Courts. The survey responses are on a five point Likert scale measuring levels of agreement with each question. The option of selecting "not applicable" for every question was included. The demographic information was entered into the spreadsheet verbatim. Survey responses were not used if they had "not applicable" listed for every question. If no response was given for a question, it was left blank. Data was evaluated overall and for each demographic category.

Findings

Responses were grouped into three categories: positive, neutral and negative. "Strongly agree" and "agree" are combined and considered "positive" responses. "Strongly disagree" and "disagree" are combined and considered "negative" responses. The results of the survey were evaluated and organized as follows: (1) overall results, (2) results by category, and (3) demographic results.

Background Information/Demographics

Demographics of the respondents closely matched the total population. That is, of the survey respondents, 46 percent were male and 54 percent female as compared to the Travis County population breakdown of 52 percent male and 48 percent female. (See Figure 3)
Racial comparisons between the survey respondents and the population of Travis County were similar with some variations. The largest difference was the percentage of White respondents, 60 percent, which is less than the general population percentage of 83 percent. The Hispanic or Latino percentage of respondents was 21 percent which is also less than the Travis County population percentage of 33 percent. The Black or African American percentage of respondents was the same as the general population in the county at 8 percent. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009) (See Figure 4)
In the survey question asking whether respondents were represented by an attorney (See Figure 5 below), a substantial majority of the respondents (78 percent) indicated they were not represented by an attorney on the day they completed our questionnaire on access and fairness. Twenty-two percent said they were represented by an attorney on the day they completed our survey questions.
On the survey question asking the individual's primary language, a large percentage of the respondents (93 percent) said their primary language was English (See Figure 6 on the next page). Five percent of the respondents indicated that Spanish was their primary language while the remaining 1 percent of respondents said their primary language was a language other than English or Spanish.
Overall Results – Access and Fairness Survey

A total of 419 responses were received from the four major court entities. That is, the civil district courts, family law courts, clerk offices and the civil county courts at law. Listed below in Figure 7 is a detailed breakdown of the responses by category.

Figure 7 - Number of Responses by Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>NUMBER OF RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District Courts</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Law Courts</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk Offices</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co. Courts at Law</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>419</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On questions relating to access, the Civil Courts did not do as well as desired. (See Figure 8 below) Only three questions reached above the 80 percent positive target rating, five questions received a positive response rate in the 70 percent range and two questions received a positive rating below 70 percent.

Figure 8: Overall Results – Access Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Finding the Courthouse was easy</th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>40%</th>
<th>60%</th>
<th>80%</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Forms were clear and easy to understand</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Felt safe in the Courthouse</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Courts remove barriers to service</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Able to get done in a reasonable time</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Court staff paid attention to my needs</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Treated with courtesy and respect</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Easily found the courtroom office needed</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Court’s website was useful</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Court’s hours made it easy to do business</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Feeling safe in the courthouse received the highest positive rating of 87 percent and the question about whether it was easy to find the courthouse received the second highest rating at 85 percent positive. Question 7, "I was treated with courtesy and respect" received an 83 percent positive response rating and an 8 percent negative rating. Question 5, "I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time" received a 69 percent positive and a 15
percent negative response. Question 9, "The court's Web site was useful" received the lowest positive response rate of 64 percent with a 17 percent negative response.

For overall results relating to fairness, no questions reached the 80 percent favorable target. (See Figure 9 below) Fairness questions 3 and 4 received the most favorable responses with a 73 percent positive response to the questions, "The judge had the information necessary to make a good decision about my case" and "I was treated the same as everyone else". Fairness question 5, "As I leave the court, I know what to do next about my case" received a 70 percent positive response but had 15 percent negative responses.

Figure 9: Overall Results – Fairness Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Results - Fairness Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n=419</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 1. My case was handled fairly:
  - Agree: 67%  
  - Neutral: 16%  
  - Disagree: 17%

- 2. The judge listened to me before making a decision:
  - Agree: 69%  
  - Neutral: 13%  
  - Disagree: 18%

- 3. The judge had information to make a good decision:
  - Agree: 73%  
  - Neutral: 12%  
  - Disagree: 15%

- 4. I was treated the same as everyone else:
  - Agree: 73%  
  - Neutral: 10%  
  - Disagree: 17%

- 5. I know what to do next about my case:
  - Agree: 70%  
  - Neutral: 15%  
  - Disagree: 15%

The remaining two questions relating to fairness, Question 1, "The way my case was handled was fair" scored a 67 percent positive and 17 percent negative and Question 2, "The
judge listened to my side of the story before he or she made a good decision about my case.” scored a 69 percent positive and had the largest number of negative responses at 18 percent.

Results by Category

Category results include the Civil District Courts, Civil Family Courts, Civil County Courts at Law, District Clerk’s Office, County Clerk’s Office, Legal Self-Help Center and the Civil Court’s website. The results for Probate Court and Justice of the Peace Court, Precinct 5, were not included in this analysis, however, the paper surveys were forwarded to the Probate Judge and Justice of the Peace for Precinct 5, for their use as a management tool.

Only twelve responses were received from the Legal Self-Help Center users during the two-week survey period even though many positive comments were made in the open ended questions section by individuals who had frequented the Legal Self-Help Center in the past and took the time to write positive comments about their prior visits. Due to this low response rate, the Legal Self-Help Center responses were combined with the Family Court responses since the Self-Help Center only provides services for Family Court users in uncontested matters.

Surprisingly, only 14 responses were received through the internet on the Civil Court’s website. The surveys from this category were collapsed into the various categories depending on the court user’s answer to the question, “Where did you conduct business today?” Due to the small number of responses for the District and County Court Offices, 72 and 50, respectively, these responses were combined into one category called “Clerk Offices”.

Results by Category – Civil District Courts

The results for the Civil District Courts are illustrated in Figure 10 on the next page.
There are some variations to the overall results despite it being the largest represented group with 140 responses. Four access questions equaled or exceeded 80 percent and Question 10, "The court's hours of operation made it easy for me to do my business" barely missed the 80 percent favorable target with a response rate of 79 percent. Question 9, "The court's Web site was useful" received a 69 percent positive response compared to the overall positive response rate of 64 percent. Question 5, "I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time" received the lowest positive response rate of the access questions for the civil district courts at 67 percent. The fairness questions scored lower than desired and none of them
reached the target. Additionally, all the fairness questions had high negative scores as well. Question 11 regarding how the case was handled received the lowest positive rating of 63 percent which was lower than the overall rate of 67 percent. Question 12 about the judge listening to their story before deciding received the second lowest response of 64 percent and Question 15 about knowing what to do next about my case received a low response rate (73 percent) but was higher than the overall results of 70 percent.

Results by Category – Family Courts

Figure 11: Family Courts – Access and Fairness Results

Family Courts - Access and Fairness Survey

n=117

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Positive Percentage</th>
<th>Neutral Percentage</th>
<th>Negative Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Finding the Courthouse was easy.</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Forms were clear and easy to understand.</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Felt safe in the Courthouse.</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Courts remove barriers to service.</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Able to get done in a reasonable time.</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Court staff paid attention to my needs.</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Treated with courtesy and respect.</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Easily found the courtroom/office needed.</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Court’s website was useful.</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Court’s hours made it easy to do business.</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. My case was handled fairly.</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The judge listened to me before making a decision.</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The judge had information to make a good decision.</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I was treated the same as everyone else.</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I know what to do next about my case.</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results for the Family Courts are illustrated in Figure 11 for access and fairness. With regards to access, many court users reported that finding the courthouse was easy (84 percent); they felt safe in the courthouse (87 percent) and were treated with courtesy and respect (87 percent). However, there were many low scoring areas including: The forms were clear and easy to understand (76 percent); the courts removed barriers to service (78 percent); they were able to get things done in a reasonable amount of time (65 percent); court staff paid attention to my needs (79 percent); the court’s website was useful (62 percent); and court’s hours made it easy to do business (79 percent). Many of the family court users (20 percent) responded “neutral” to the question about the usefulness of the Court’s website. Additionally, 19 percent neither agreed nor disagreed but rather remained neutral on whether they were able to get things done in a reasonable amount of time.

Most court users agreed that the judge listened to their side of the story (80 percent) and that they were treated the same as everyone else (83 percent) in Family Courts. The procedural fairness questions that scored below the 80 percent target was whether they felt their case was handled fairly (76 percent) and whether the judge had information to make a good decision (78 percent). The lowest scoring fairness question for Family Courts at 75 percent was whether the court user knew what to do next about their case when they left the courtroom.

*Results by Category – Civil County Courts at Law*

The County Courts at Law had the lowest number of responses (50) of any of the courts or offices involved in this survey. As a result, the findings had a significantly lower confidence level and a higher error rate due to the smaller sample size. The results for the Civil County Courts at Law are illustrated in Figure 12 for access and fairness.
Additionally, all the fairness questions had high negative scores. Question 13 received the highest positive rating of 63 percent about whether the judge had information to make a good decision. Question 11 regarding whether the case was handled fairly received a rating of 56 percent which was significantly lower than the overall rate of 67 percent. Question 12 about the judge listening to their story before deciding received the lowest response of 53 percent.

Question 14 about being treated the same as everyone else as well as Question 15 about knowing what to do next about their case when they left the courtroom both received a low response rate
(58 percent) which was lower than the overall results of 73 and 70 percent respectively.

Graphical representations of each question by category can be found in Appendix H through V.

**Results by Category – Clerk Offices**

The results for the Clerk Offices relate only to the access questions --- and not the fairness questions ---- since the fairness questions were answered only if an individual appeared before a judge on the day their survey was completed. With regards to the Clerk Offices access survey results, many court users reported that finding the courthouse was easy (90 percent), felt safe in the courthouse (90 percent), removed barriers to service (83 percent), treated with courtesy and respect (85 percent), and easily found the offices needed (81 percent). *(See Figure 13 below)*

**Figure 13: Clerk Offices – Access Survey Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clerk Offices - Access Survey Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n=112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Finding the Courthouse was easy.</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Forms were clear and easy to understand.</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Felt safe in the Courthouse.</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Courts remove barriers to service.</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Able to get done in a reasonable time.</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Court staff paid attention to my needs.</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Treated with courtesy and respect.</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Easily found the courtroom/office needed.</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Court’s website was useful.</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Court’s hours made it easy to do business.</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The low scoring areas included: The forms were clear and easy to understand (79 percent); court staff paid attention to my needs (79 percent); they were able to get things done in a reasonable amount of time (74 percent); court’s hours made it easy to do business (73 percent); and the court’s website was useful (71 percent). Many of the users of the Clerk Offices (15 percent) responded “neutral” to the question about the usefulness of the Court’s website. Additionally, 19 percent neither agreed nor disagreed but rather remained neutral on whether they were able to get things done in a reasonable amount of time.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

This survey was useful in illuminating how the court users and general public perceive the Travis County Civil Courts. Areas of outstanding performance are acknowledged and areas that need improvement have been identified. Conclusions and recommendations are listed below:

**Conclusion 1: The results of this survey are reflective of the population.** The demographics of the respondents of the survey are reflective of the population in both ethnicity and gender. *(See Figure 14 below)* The variations in ethnicity in our 2010 survey compared to the 2009 United States Census Bureau data could be attributed to the changing demographics relating to the slow economic climate in Central Texas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>2010 Survey Results</th>
<th>2009 Census Bureau</th>
<th>Percent Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White, Not Hispanic</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
<td>+8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>-11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Race</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>+2.0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2.9%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>-2.6</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.8%</td>
<td>+0.5</td>
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<td>48%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>46%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>-6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Source: (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009)*
Although the percentages from the survey do not exactly replicate the United States Census figures, they do reflect the diversity of the Travis County community. The conclusion is being made that the results of this report are reflective of the population.

**Recommendation 1(a): This survey should be repeated in the future on a regular basis to capture the opinions of the court community.** It is recommended that this survey be conducted on an annual basis and compared to past data in an attempt to identify any patterns to advance efforts to make improvements. It is further recommended that the data collected on a regular basis be compared to past data to identify any patterns that would help the Courts in improving access and fairness to justice. This initial survey was a good starting point and knowing about trends is more important than what is occurring in a single point in time.

**Recommendation 1(b): Focus improvement efforts on the specific areas with lower scores.** The Civil Courts will benefit from careful evaluation of the survey results following each survey administration and by focusing improvement efforts on specific areas. Attempting to improve in all areas at the same time could result in confusion and less than ideal results across the board.

**Conclusion 2: Some areas of access are meeting the public’s needs at a high level of satisfaction.** Several access questions received outstanding scores both overall and by category. Specifically, the ability to find the Courthouse easily, feeling safe in the Courthouse and being treated with courtesy and respect. Even though the overall score on the Civil Courts’ efforts to remove physical and language barriers to service was rated at 77 percent which is slightly below the 80 percent target, District Courts and Clerk Offices received higher scores of 80 percent and 83 percent, respectively.
Recommendation 2(a): Continue efforts to provide easy access and a safe environment. Continue efforts to maintain a high level of satisfaction in these areas by working closely with Facilities Management to keep signage updated when changes are made in the Courthouse and continue to work with the Sheriff’s Office on having a security presence not only at the security screening stations at the two entrances/exits of the Courthouse but also by having roaming deputies patrol the courtrooms, hallways and public waiting areas in the HMS Courthouse.

Recommendation 2(b): Continue providing staff training on customer service and diversity training. The Courts have made a concerted effort to provide court management personnel and court staff training on customer service, diversity and dealing with people. These training opportunities should continue to be offered on a regular basis.

Conclusion 3: The Court’s website does not meet the needs of the court community. The Court’s website does not provide the type of information many of the court users expect to find in a technologically savvy city (Austin, Texas) where many high technology companies are located. Court website upgrades are a lower priority and only urgent items such as daily docket information and visiting judge assignments are kept current.

Recommendation 3: Improvements to the Court’s website should be made. Content should be reviewed on a regular basis by the Courts Technology Team as well as administrative management and updated as needed. A survey could be posted on the website asking the following questions:

1. “What was useful on the website? What was distracting?”
2. What would you like to see added to the website that would make your experience more enjoyable or efficient?

3. Would you like to be able to do more court-related business on our website? If yes, please elaborate.

Court management and the Court Technology Team should review the responses to the above questions and make a proposal in the next budget cycle for website improvements based on the needs of the court community.

**Conclusion 4: The public does not always perceive the Courts as being fair.** While the percentage of responses from those surveyed who felt their case was handled fairly, that the judge listened to both sides of the story, and had the information needed to make a good decision were relatively low, this is not surprising since most court users are not pleased about having to appear in court. The Travis County civil judges are well-trained jurists who, although concerned about public perception, would not allow public opinion to influence the rulings they make on the bench. The inescapable truth is that judges’ decisions affect people’s lives and can be taken personally. That being said, research shows that as long as the process seems fair, everyone is treated the same, and the judge listens to both sides of the story, that generally both parties will be satisfied with the courts. (Rottman & Tomkins, 1999, p. p. 25) In short, procedural fairness is the primary factor that shapes positive perceptions of court experiences.

**Recommendation 4: Continue to seek training opportunities that will increase awareness of procedural fairness and diversity issues.** The civil judges in Travis County should continue to make fair, impartial and unbiased decisions on the bench and continue to seek training opportunities that will increase awareness of procedural fairness and diversity issues. Being made aware of the less than ideal response rate will be an incentive to the Civil Courts to
be more conscious of how people perceive their actions in terms of fairness. Training opportunities that focus on issues relating to procedural fairness and diversity should continue to be offered on a regular basis to Judges and court staff. Additionally, information on what the public should expect from the Travis County judiciary in terms of procedural fairness should be placed on the Courts’ newly revamped website as a public education initiative targeting our court users.

**Conclusion 5: The courts should study their business practices for ways to reduce the amount of time a court patron spends handling routine aspects of court business.** With the backlogs and large volume of cases in many Courts, the virtue of promptness is becoming increasingly important to court patrons. The Courts should study their business practices for ways to reduce the amount of time a court patron must spend handling routine aspects of the Court system such as filing papers, obtaining court documents or making payments to ensure that court business is conducted in a reasonable amount of time. Additionally, the Courts should continue to develop improvements to existing case management practices and consider implementing time standards for conducting business in the courts.

**Recommendation 5: Continue to seek out technology opportunities that will make using the Courts less time consuming and more responsive to the needs of our customers.** The civil judges in Travis County should continue to make efforts to explore new technology that provides convenience to our customers and reduces the amount of “down time” that typically occurs. That is, continue to explore innovative ways to provide records electronically and further explore the use of technology for other routine aspects of the Courts that can be time consuming for our customers.
Recommendations for Administering Future Surveys on Access and Fairness

1. Giving court patrons who took our survey the option of keeping the blue pen they used to take the survey --- which had the Travis County logo and court website listed on the outside of the pen--- was a good idea in theory, however, the survey results showed that our website does not meet the needs of the computer savvy population in Austin, Texas. Therefore, the civil courts must significantly upgrade our website if we wish to use this incentive to attract court patrons to complete our survey in the future.

2. Using the survey database Confirmit to capture the access and fairness survey data, which is available by contacting the staff at the National Center for State Courts, should be used to collect the data in future surveys since they are able to provide raw figures in whatever format required. Other survey tools, such as SurveyMonkey, cost $20 per month while the Confirmit database through the National Center for State Courts is available at no cost and also includes technical support from the Center.

3. Attracting people’s attention by having brightly colored helium balloons at the survey table made it easier to convince court patrons to take the survey. Future access and fairness surveys administered in the Travis County Civil Courts should include this successful tactic to draw people’s attention to the survey table.
Works Cited


Casper, J. D., Tyler, T., & Fisher, B. *Procedural Justice in Felony Cases*.


Travis County Civil Courts. (n.d.). Strategic Plan for the Travis County Civil District Courts.


Appendix A: Court Structure of Texas

March 1, 2010

Supreme Court
(1 Court -- 9 Justices)
- Statewide Jurisdiction
- Final appellate jurisdiction in civil cases and juvenile cases.

Court of Criminal Appeals
(1 Court -- 9 Judges)
- Statewide Jurisdiction
- Final appellate jurisdiction in criminal cases.

Courts of Appeals
(14 Courts -- 80 Justices)
- Regional Jurisdiction
- Intermediate appeals from trial courts in their respective courts of appeals districts.

District Courts
(453 Courts -- 453 Judges)
- (356 Districts Containing One County and 97 Districts Containing More than One County)
- Jurisdiction
  - Original jurisdiction in civil actions over $200 or $500, divorce, title to land, contested elections.
  - Original jurisdiction in felony criminal matters.
  - Juvenile matters.
  - 3 district courts are designated criminal district courts; some others are directed to give preference to certain specialized areas.

County-Level Courts
(303 Courts -- 303 Judges)
- Constitutional County Courts (254)
  (One Court in Each County)
  - Jurisdiction
    - Original jurisdiction in civil actions between $200 and $10,000.
    - Probate (contested matters may be transferred to District Court).
    - Exclusive original jurisdiction over misdemeanors with fines greater than $500 or jail sentence.
    - Juvenile matters.
    - Appeals de novo from lower courts or on the record from municipal courts of record.

Statutory County Courts (231)
(Established in 85 Counties)
- Jurisdiction
  - All civil, criminal, original and appellate actions prescribed by law for constitutional county courts.
  - In addition, jurisdiction over civil matters up to $100,000 (some courts may have higher maximum jurisdiction amount).

Statutory Probate Courts (18)
(Established in 10 Counties)
- Jurisdiction
  - Limited primarily to probate matters.

Justice Courts
(822 Courts -- 822 Judges)
(Established in Precincts Within Each County)
- Jurisdiction
  - Civil actions of not more than $10,000.
  - Small claims.
  - Criminal misdemeanors punishable by fine only (no confinement).
  - Magistrate functions.

Municipal Courts
(915 Cities -- 1,493 Judges)
- Jurisdiction
  - Criminal misdemeanors punishable by fine only (no confinement).
  - Exclusive original jurisdiction over municipal-ordinance criminal cases.
  - Limited civil jurisdiction in cases involving dangerous dogs.
  - Magistrate functions.

Local Trial Courts of Limited Jurisdiction

1. The dollar amount is currently unclear.
2. All justice courts and courts in the county courts are not criminal courts. Appeals from these courts are to trial or to higher courts on the exception to the trial courts.
3. Some municipal courts act as courts of record — appeals from those courts are to higher courts on the exception to the trial courts.
4. A fine of not more than $100 for a minor offense, a fine not to exceed $100 for a municipal-court violation, a fine not to exceed $1,500 for all others.

50
Appendix B: Judicial Notification

Judge Dietz and the 250th Court Staff,

As you may know, I am working on a research project for the Court Executive Development Program with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). My research is on *Public Perception of Access and Fairness in the Travis County Civil Courts* and involves conducting a public opinion survey of courthouse users in the HMS Courthouse.

The survey is a tool designed by NCSC that allows courts to obtain a snapshot of the opinions of court users by measuring their perception on whether the courts are open to the public, accessible to all, and everyone is treated with fairness and respect. For those of you who are interested, additional information about the development and utilization of the survey may be found on the link below:


Surveys will be handed out on the 1st floor of the HMS Courthouse to our customers by administrative staff beginning **Monday, October 25th (jury week) through Friday, November 5th (non-jury week)** from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The surveys, as attached, will also be available at the Legal Self-Help Center and on our website for our web users.

Please note this questionnaire is a department-wide assessment of how we are doing and the results will be used for academic purposes only. If you have any questions regarding the survey, please feel free to contact me.

Thanks,

Peg
Travis County Civil Courts Access and Fairness Survey

Section I: Access to the Court

Circle the Number.  

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

1. Finding the courthouse was easy.  
2. The forms I needed were clear and easy to understand.  
3. I felt safe in the courthouse.  
4. The court makes reasonable efforts to remove physical and language barriers to service.  
5. I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time.  
6. Court staff paid attention to my needs.  
7. I was treated with courtesy and respect.  
8. I easily found the courtroom or office I needed.  
9. The court’s Web site was useful.  
10. The court’s hours of operation made it easy for me to do my business.

If you are a party to a legal matter and appeared before a Judge today, complete questions 11-15:

Section II: Fairness

11. The way my case was handled was fair.  
12. The judge listened to my side of the story before he or she made a decision.  
13. The judge had the information necessary to make a good decision about my case.  
14. I was treated the same as everyone else.  
15. As I leave the court, I know what to do next about my case.

Section III: Background Information

What did you do at the court today?  
(Check all that apply.)

☐ Search court records/obtain documents  
☐ File papers  
☐ Make a payment  
☐ Get information  
☐ Appear as a witness  
☐ Attorney representing a client  
☐ Jury duty  
☐ Attend a hearing or trial  
☐ Law enforcement/probation/social services staff  
☐ Party to a legal matter

What type of case brought you to the courthouse today?

☐ Accident/Personal Injury  
☐ Child Protective Services (CPS)  
☐ Contract Dispute  
☐ Divorce/Child Custody or Support  
☐ Landlord/Tenant  
☐ Property Dispute  
☐ Other: __________________________

Are you represented by an attorney today?

☐ Yes  ☐ No
Appendix C: Travis County Access and Fairness Survey (continued)

Travis County Civil Courts Access and Fairness Survey

Where did you conduct business today?

☐ District Court      ☐ District Clerk’s Office      ☐ Justice of the Peace Court (JP 5)
☐ Family Court       ☐ County Clerk’s Office       ☐ Probate Court
☐ County Court at Law ☐ Legal Self-Help Center      ☐ Other: __________________________

How often are you typically in this courthouse? (Choose the closest estimate.)

☐ First time in this courthouse
☐ Once a year or less
☐ Several times a year
☐ Regularly

The following questions are for classification and demographic purposes only:

How do you identify yourself?

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
☐ Asian
☐ Black or African American
☐ Hispanic or Latino
☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
☐ White
☐ Mixed Race
☐ Other: __________________________

What is your primary language?

☐ English
☐ Spanish
☐ Other: __________________________

What is your gender?

☐ Male    ☐ Female

Supplemental Questions (Self-Help Center Users):

1. What was helpful about the Self-Help Center?

2. Were you able to find what you needed? If not, please list what you needed but was lacking.

3. From your experience, what can we do to make your visit better?

4. What information would have been helpful to you today?

5. Are there any comments you would like to share with us about your experience with the Legal Self-Help Center?

Thank you for your time today. Your feedback is very important to us!
Cuestionario de Acceso y Justicia de las Cortes/ Tribunales Civiles del Condado de Travis

Sección I: Acceso a la Corte/Tribunal

Circule el Número. 

| 1 = No De Acuerdo Para Nada; 2 = No De Acuerdo; 3 = Neutral; 4 = De Acuerdo; 5 = Muy de Acuerdo |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Encontrar a el edificio de la corte/tribunal fue facil. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |
| 2. Los formularios que necessitaba eran claros y facil de entender. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |
| 3. Me senti seguro y fuera de peligro en el edificio. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |
| 4. La corte hace esfuerzos razonables de eliminar barreras fisicas y de lenguaje para dar servicios. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |
| 5. Pude hacer mis asuntos en la corte/tribunal en un tiempo razonable. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |
| 6. Los empleados de la corte/tribunal fueron atentos a mis necesidades. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |
| 7. Me trataron con respeto y cortesía. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |
| 8. Encontre la sala de corte/tribunal o la oficina que necesitaba. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |
| 9. Es sitio Web de la corte/tribunal fue util. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |
| 10. Se me hizo facil hacer mis asuntos con las horas de operacion de la corte/tribunal. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |

Si es usted una persona que tiene que ver con un asunto legal y aparecio delante del Juez hoy, complete preguntas 11-15:

Sección II: Justicia

11. La manera que se trato a mi caso fue justo. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |
12. El juez escucho lo que yo tenia que decir antes de que tomara una decisión. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |
13. El juez tenia la informacion necesaria para hacer una buena decision en cuanto a mi caso. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |
14. Me trataron igual que a todos los demas. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |
15. Ahora que salgo de la corte/tribunal, se cual es el proximo paso en cuanto a mi caso. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |

Sección III: Informacion de Fondo o Origen

Que hizo en la Corte/Tribunal hoy? (Marque todo lo que aplique.)

☐ Revisar expedientes de la corte / obtener documentos
☐ Presentar papeles
☐ Hacer un pago
☐ Conseguir informacion
☐ Aparecer como testigo
☐ Abogado representando a un cliente
☐ Para seleccion de jurado
☐ Aparecer para una audiencia de corte/tribunal
☐ Oficial de la ley / empleado de supervision o libertad condicional / empleado de servicios sociales
☐ Una persona que esta envuelto en un asunto legal.

Sobre que tipo de caso vino a el edificio de la corte hoy?

☐ Accidente / Heridas Corporal
☐ Servicios Protectivos para Ninos (CPS)
☐ Desacuerdo de Contrato
☐ Divorcio / Custodia de Menor
☐ Soporte Monetario
☐ Propietario / Inquilino
☐ Desacuerdo de Propiedad
☐ Otro: ______________________

Tiene a un abogado que lo representa hoy?

☐ Si ☐ No

CUESTIONARIO CONTINUA DETRAS DE ESTA PAGINA.
Cuestionario de Acceso y Justicia de las Cortes/ Tribunales Civiles del Condado de Travis

Donde hizo sus tramites o asuntos?

☐ Corte/Tribunal del Distrito
☐ Corte/Tribunal de Familia
☐ Corte/Tribunal del Condado
☐ Oficina del Secretario de las Cortes/Tribunales del Distrito
☐ Oficina del Secretario de las Cortes/Tribunales del Condado
☐ Centro Legal de Ayuda Priopía a Sí Mismo
☐ Corte/Tribunal del Juez de la Paz (JP 5)
☐ Corte/Tribunal de Testamento
☐ Otro: ______________________

Que tan seguido viene a este edificio de corte/tribunal? (Eliga la respuesta mas correcta.)

☐ Es mi primera vez en este edificio de corte/tribunal
☐ Una vez al año o menos
☐ Varias veces al año
☐ Regularmente

Las siguientes preguntas son solamente para clasificacion y razones de demograficos:

Como se identifica?
☐ Indio Americano o Indigeno de Alaska
☐ Asiatico
☐ Negro o Africano Americano
☐ Hispano o Latino
☐ Indigeno de Hawaii u Otras Islas del Pacifico
☐ Blanco
☐ Raza Mezclada
☐ Otro: ______________________

Cual es su lenguaje principal?
☐ Ingles
☐ Espanol
☐ Otro: ______________________

Cual es su sexo?
☐ Hombre
☐ Mujer
Cuestionario de Acceso y Justicia de las Cortes/ Tribunales Civiles del Condado de Travis

_Preguntas adicionales:_

1. ¿Qué fue útil acerca del Centro de autoservicio Legal?

2. Pudo encontrar lo que usted necesitó? Si no, por favor la lista lo que usted necesitó pero faltaba?

3. De su experiencia, qué podemos hacer hacer su visita mejor?

4. ¿Qué información habría sido útil a usted hoy?

5. Hay cualquier comentario que usted querría compartir con nosotros acerca de su experiencia con el Centro de autoservicio Legal?

_Gracias por su tiempo hoy. Saber cuales son sus opiniones es muy importante para nosotros!
MEMORANDUM

TO: Survey Assistants
FROM: Peg Liedtke, Civil Courts Director
DATE: October 21, 2010
RE: Access and Fairness Survey – Civil Courts

Thank you for agreeing to assist in the administering of the survey for the Civil Courts on the public’s perception of access and fairness. The survey will be conducted beginning Monday, October 25th through Friday, November 5, 2010.

Attached please find copies of the “draft” volunteer schedules for those two weeks. Please review the schedules and let me know if you have any questions or concerns. If we need more volunteers, especially during the week of October 25-29, 2010, we can recruit them from the staff in the District Judges’ Office and the Court Administrator’s Office.

I am counting on each of you to be available on the date(s) and time(s) indicated on the schedules, so if your plans change or you will be late for whatever reason, please call the front desk in the District Judges’ Office at 854-9300 and leave a message for me and my assistance, Lorraine Elzia, so we can ensure adequate coverage.

Attached is a suggested script on what to say to people to invite them to participate. There are also suggestions on how to overcome objections you might hear. Also, to help identify you to the public, it would be helpful if you would wear your county badge when you are conducting the survey.

Thanks again for your help and participation!
### PUBLIC OPINIÓN SURVEY VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE – (October 2010)

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<th>Time Scheduled</th>
<th>Monday (10/25)</th>
<th>Tuesday (10/26)</th>
<th>Wednesday (10/27)</th>
<th>Thursday (10/28)</th>
<th>Friday (10/29)</th>
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<td>LUNCH BREAK</td>
<td>LUNCH BREAK</td>
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### PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE - (November 2010)

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<tbody>
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<td>8:00 to 9:00 a.m.</td>
<td>1. Ted Taylor</td>
<td>1. Ted Taylor</td>
<td>1. Ted Taylor</td>
<td>1. Ted Taylor</td>
<td>1. Ted Taylor</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


| 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. | 1. Ted Taylor | 1. Ted Taylor | 1. Ted Taylor | 1. Ted Taylor | 1. Ted Taylor |


| 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. | LUNCH BREAK | LUNCH BREAK | LUNCH BREAK | LUNCH BREAK | LUNCH BREAK |

| 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. | 1. Ted Taylor | 1. Ted Taylor | 1. Ted Taylor | 1. Ted Taylor | 1. Ted Taylor |

| 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. | 1. Ted Taylor | 1. Ted Taylor | 1. Ted Taylor | 1. Ted Taylor | 1. Ted Taylor |

| 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. | 1. Ted Taylor | 1. Ted Taylor | 1. Ted Taylor | 1. Ted Taylor | 1. Ted Taylor |

SCRIPT: Hello! We are looking at ways to improve customer service in the Civil Courts. Can you take a minute to complete our survey and tell us about your experience today?

Listed below are some common objections you might encounter and suggested replies to use to try and overcome them:

1. "You don’t want to know what I think, it’s very bad."
   a. Yes, we do, especially if it was a bad experience, because we need to know what went wrong so we can fix it.

2. "This is my first time here." (e.g., I am not qualified to fill this out.)
   a. Yes, we really need to hear from people who are here for the first time, because you have fresh eyes, and your perspective is important to us.

3. "This doesn’t pertain to me." (e.g., This is frequently heard from law enforcement officials, attorneys, etc.)
   a. Yes, it pertains to anyone who was in the courthouse today. If you feel an item is not applicable then you don’t have to answer that question and just mark “not applicable” (n/a).

4. "I am just here to pick up some papers, I didn’t go to court."
   a. That’s okay, that’s what lots of people do here at the courthouse.
YOU BE THE JUDGE

Please Tell Us How the Civil Courts Can Better Serve You.

Make Your Opinion Count!
USTED SEA EL JUEZ O LA JUEZA

Por favor diganos que puede hacer las cortes/tribunales civiles para servirle mejor a usted.

Haga que su opinión cuente!
Appendix G: Souvenir Pen with Court Name, County Logo and Website

Actual Size – This is the actual size of your imprint, shown at 100%.
Please approve imprint (text and/or logo), font style and size shown below.

100%

Enlarged View – For your convenience we have enlarged the imprint to 200%.
Please note – your imprint will not print this size.

200%

TRAVIS COUNTY CIVIL COURTS
WWW.TRAVISCOUNTYCOURTS.COM
Appendix H: Question 1, Results by Category

Finding the courthouse was easy
n=419

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Negative Percentage</th>
<th>Neutral Percentage</th>
<th>Positive Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>District Courts</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Courts</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Courts</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Courts at Law</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk Offices</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Appendix I: Question 2, Results by Category

Forms were clear and easy to understand
n=419

<table>
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<th>Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District Courts</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>72%</td>
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<td>Family Courts</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<td>Overall</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix J: Question 3, Results by Category

Felt safe in the courthouse
n=419

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Positive</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District Courts</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Courts</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Courts at Law</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk Offices</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</table>

Appendix K: Question 4, Results by Category

Court makes reasonable efforts to remove physical and language barriers
n=419

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Positive</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District Courts</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Courts</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Courts at Law</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk Offices</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</table>
Appendix L: Question 5, Results by Category

Able to get court business done in reasonable amount of time
n=419

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Negative Percentage</th>
<th>Neutral Percentage</th>
<th>Positive Percentage</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>District Courts</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Courts</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Courts at Law</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk Offices</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>16%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Appendix M: Question 6, Results by Category

Court staff paid attention to needs
n=419

<table>
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<th>Category</th>
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<th>Neutral Percentage</th>
<th>Positive Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District Courts</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Courts</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Courts at Law</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clerk Offices</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix N: Question 7, Results by Category

Treated with courtesy and respect
n=419

- District Courts: 9% Negative, 9% Neutral, 82% Positive
- Family Courts: 7% Negative, 6% Neutral, 87% Positive
- County Courts at Law: 8% Negative, 8% Neutral, 84% Positive
- Clerk Offices: 4% Negative, 11% Neutral, 85% Positive
- Overall: 8% Negative, 9% Neutral, 83% Positive

Appendix O: Question 8, Results by Category

Easily found the courtroom/office needed
n=419

- District Courts: 14% Negative, 12% Neutral, 75% Positive
- Family Courts: 10% Negative, 11% Neutral, 79% Positive
- County Courts at Law: 11% Negative, 13% Neutral, 79% Positive
- Clerk Offices: 6% Negative, 13% Neutral, 81% Positive
- Overall: 10% Negative, 14% Neutral, 76% Positive
Appendix P: Question 9, Results by Category

Court's website was useful
n=419

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Negative Percentage</th>
<th>Neutral Percentage</th>
<th>Positive Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District Courts</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>69%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Courts</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Courts at Law</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk Offices</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>71%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>64%</td>
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</table>

Appendix Q: Question 10, Results by Category

Court's hours of operation made it easy to do business
n=419

<table>
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<th>Category</th>
<th>Negative Percentage</th>
<th>Neutral Percentage</th>
<th>Positive Percentage</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Courts</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Courts at Law</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk Offices</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>75%</td>
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</table>
Appendix R: Question 11, Results by Category

The way my case was handled was fair
n=419

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Positive Percentage</th>
<th>Neutral Percentage</th>
<th>Negative Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Family Courts</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>County Courts at Law</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk Offices</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
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</table>

Appendix S: Question 12, Results by Category

Judge listened to my side of story before making a decision
n=419

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Positive Percentage</th>
<th>Neutral Percentage</th>
<th>Negative Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District Courts</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Courts</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Courts at Law</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clerk Offices</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix T: Question 13, Results by Category

**Judge had information necessary to make a good decision about my case**

- **n=419**
- District Courts: 14% (9%) Negative, 32% (5%) Neutral, 77% (63%) Positive
- Family Courts: 12% (10%) Negative, 78% (63%) Neutral, 7% (5%) Positive
- County Courts at Law: 8% (22%) Negative, 70% (70%) Neutral, 12% (12%) Positive
- Clerk Offices: 15% (12%) Negative, 73% (73%) Neutral, 12% (12%) Positive

Appendix U: Question 14, Results by Category

**Treated the same as everyone else**

- **n=419**
- District Courts: 19% (9%) Negative, 5% (5%) Neutral, 72% (83%) Positive
- Family Courts: 12% (5%) Negative, 37% (58%) Neutral, 83% (58%) Positive
- County Courts at Law: 8% (16%) Negative, 76% (76%) Neutral, 8% (16%) Positive
- Clerk Offices: 17% (10%) Negative, 73% (73%) Neutral, 8% (16%) Positive
Appendix V: Question 15, Results by Category

I know what to do next about my case

n=419

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>District Courts</th>
<th>Family Courts</th>
<th>County Courts at Law</th>
<th>Clerk Offices</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Percentage</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>70%</td>
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<td>Neutral Percentage</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Percentage</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend:
- Yellow: Negative Percentage
- Green: Neutral Percentage
- Blue: Positive Percentage