

# COMPETENCIES

for Deputy Court Unit Executives



# Court Leadership and Managerial Competencies for Deputy Court Unit Executives

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## **Introduction**

As part of its initiative to develop a curriculum for judges, court executives, managers, supervisors, and staff, the Federal Judicial Center has developed sets of competencies pertaining to the work of various court positions. These competencies have been developed through intensive reviews and discussions with education advisory committees and other representatives from the courts. The competencies identified will be used to guide curriculum development and will serve as the focus of Center educational programs and resources.

“Competency” is a term of art in the field of education that refers to the areas of proficiency essential for successful performance in a job. The competency model assumes a developmental approach, recognizing that no one comes into any position fully formed and that everyone’s learning needs change over the course of their careers. Competencies are often grouped into areas of knowledge, skills, and attributes.

By defining competencies, describing the behaviors associated with them, and explaining the intended outcomes derived from using them appropriately, the Center can shape specific learning opportunities to help participants improve their proficiency and measure their progress. Individuals can identify areas for growth and select appropriate programs to attend or resources to study. Mentors can help learners practice skills, evaluate personal attributes, and improve performance; likewise, supervisors can craft developmental assignments and provide feedback as employees strengthen their proficiency in any given set of competencies.

The competencies in this publication are designed for deputy court unit executives. Lists of competencies for other court positions are available on the FJC’s website at <http://fjc.dcn/content/330559/competencies-judges-and-court-staff>.

## **Working Group**

In 2015–2016, a working group for Executive Education, in concert with Center staff, identified competencies for deputy court unit executives in the federal courts. The working group was composed of the following members:

Douglas Burris, Chief Probation Officer (E.D. Mo.)  
Trey Burton, Chief Probation Officer (D. Kan.)  
Stacy Enlow, Operations Manager (Bankr. S.D. Ind.)  
Sean McAvoy, Clerk (E.D. Wis.)  
Lois McCloud, Training Manager (D.S.C.)  
Chief Judge Ray Mullins (Bankr. N.D. Ga.)  
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\* Except where noted, all Center staff were members of the Executive Education Group of the Education Division.

# Court Leadership and Managerial Competencies for Deputy Court Unit Executives

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- Business Acumen
- Composure
- Decision Quality
- Embracing Diversity
- Ethics and Values
- Integrity and Trust
- Listening
- Managerial Courage

## **BUSINESS ACUMEN**

### **Associated Behaviors**

- Assesses current and possible future policies, practices, trends, technology, and information affecting his or her court unit.
- Is proactive about observing national trends and evolving policy based on changes to the judiciary.
- Employs concepts and principles of delegation.
- Aligns roles and functions of personnel and other resources consistent with best business practices.
- Manages court unit operations to inform analysis and decisions.

### **Intended Outcomes**

When a CUE and a deputy CUE possess *Business Acumen*, they have an understanding of the systems, policies, and procedures needed to successfully serve in their positions. They have knowledge of the federal judicial process. They also have a working knowledge of the HR manual (including time and attendance and EDR) and the *Guide to Judiciary Policy*.

The CUE and the deputy CUE who exhibit *Business Acumen* on the job are able to direct financial operations. They are proficient at interpreting and responding to FAST data and know audit procedures. The CUE works with the deputy CUE to make sure the court unit is operating “in the black.”

When the CUE encounters a policy or procedure he or she either does not know or needs to become more proficient in, he or she takes advantage of training opportunities. The CUE displays an understanding of where data are located and proficiency in interpreting them.

The CUE and the deputy CUE with business acumen collaborate with employees at all levels on how to move forward. They inform staff and the court unit of changing directions or trends. The CUE and the deputy CUE are prepared to adjust for change and are flexible with changing circumstances.

The CUE and the deputy CUE have win-win relationships within and outside the court. The CUE is able to network with peers in order to influence policy. The CUE and the deputy CUE are trusted by all stakeholders. The court unit is viewed by external stakeholders as efficient and well run.

## **COMPOSURE**

### **Associated Behaviors**

- Is cool, calm, and collected under pressure.
- Maintains professional patience.
- Controls reactions to circumstances.
- Exhibits reliability and stability.
- Exhibits maturity.
- Maintains an even tone, a calm voice, and appropriate body language.
- Defends positions without being defensive.

### **Intended Outcomes**

The court's leaders and managers who exhibit *Composure* are patient with staff and colleagues, are able to make good decisions, are seen as approachable and humble, and have the trust and respect of peers and direct reports. Leading by example, a composed leader practices patience, accepts constructive feedback, can immediately address employee breaches in professional ethics or values, and knows when to walk away. In particular, the chief judge advocates for and participates in a 360-degree feedback process. Specifically, in Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) situations, composed leaders and managers maintain control and ensure the safety and well-being of the staff.

The court fosters an environment where conversations lead to successful results with limited fallout, tension is diffused in stressful situations, and difficult topics are communicated effectively and with sensitivity. Good and informed decision making takes place, and ideas are generated at all levels of the court. The focus is on the work at hand, and staff are not sidetracked by inappropriate emotions, turf wars, or unwinnable battles.

The staff who work in a composed organizational environment have a sense of mission and goals, feel safe and secure in speaking up and defending their own positions and beliefs, and are empowered to think creatively to contribute to work processes and successes.

## **DECISION QUALITY**

### **Associated Behaviors**

- Takes time to gather all available and relevant data.
- Evaluates data, and before making decisions, reviews data as needed.
- When problem solving, draws on personal experience as well as the experience of others both inside and outside the court unit.
- Is adept at determining short and long-term goals in decision making.

### **Intended Outcomes**

A deputy court unit executive who exhibits *Decision Quality* has a history of consistently good decision making, both short and long term. The deputy court unit executive is sought out by others for advice and problem solving. As a result, the court unit is well run.

## **EMBRACING DIVERSITY**

### **Associated Behaviors**

- Seeks opportunities to learn about cultural and generational differences.
- Provides awareness opportunities for staff.
- Demonstrates open-mindedness and respect.
- Doesn't jump to conclusions.
- Provides equitable standards for all staff.
- Recognizes diversity of professional experiences and perspectives.
- Remains observant for potential sensitivities and opportunities related to diversity.
- Addresses diversity issues in a timely manner.
- Responds quickly to reports of workplace harassment.
- Recognizes and values diversity in both his or her position and the court unit to further the mission and vision of the court more effectively and enhance the court's standing in the community.
- Uses diversity as a tool to secure future success.

### **Intended Outcomes**

A court unit's leaders and managers who *Embrace Diversity* have an increased sensitivity to diversity within the court unit and to the constituents it serves; they promote a more cohesive workforce and accept differences among staff. Court unit executives cast a wide net for job applications and assemble a team reflecting a diversity of skills and backgrounds. Diversity is exhibited at all levels of the court (leadership positions, chambers, judicial appointments, etc.). Court managers and supervisors adhere to and enforce the provisions of the EEO/EDR plan and avoid escalation of EEO/EDR issues.

A court that embraces diversity has a workforce that is representative of the community it serves and personnel practices that are reflective of the values of the federal judiciary. Training is available on topics related to diversity, and there are opportunities to recognize and celebrate diversity through a variety of mediums (such as events for the different diversity months, newsletter features). The court is trusted by the community it represents and serves, and the judiciary is seen as a preferred employer. The court has employment practices that solicit the greatest interest from diverse populations of potential staff and a workforce that reflects the greatest level of diversity achievable from within the supporting community.

Staff who work in the court feel valued, safe, and respected. Staff feel valued based on their contributions to the court's mission. Staff actively participate in events aimed at highlighting and recognizing diversity.

## **ETHICS AND VALUES**

### **Associated Behaviors**

- Adheres to an appropriate and effective set of core values and beliefs during both good times and bad times.
- Acts consistently.
- Leads by example.
- Articulates how his or her ethics and values align with those of the court unit.
- Acts in accordance with the Code of Conduct and the Guide to Judiciary Policy.
- Acknowledges and honors others in the organization when they uphold the values of the organization.
- Stands firm in convictions (when appropriate) even when there is pressure to compromise.

### **Intended Outcomes**

When a court unit is governed by *Ethics and Values*, the values of the staff are aligned with the vision and mission of the court unit. When leaders embody ethics and values, their actions and attitudes create a dedicated, committed, and loyal workforce. Leaders will reward individuals when they act according to the court unit's values and also hold accountable those who act in ways that do not align with the court unit's values.

The staff are highly motivated in performing for the court's success, not for personal recognition. Members of the organization will resolve disputes effectively by assessing different perspectives or viewpoints to resolve conflicts. Decisions will be made in a consistent manner. Everyone is treated fairly and treats others fairly as well. There is a stronger bond among supervisors and direct reports. Court employees will notice among their workforce several aspects of a highly effective organization, including an increased enthusiasm for aspiring leaders, increased trust of the management team, an increase in healthy dialogue within the organization, a decrease in personnel problems, and a decrease in employee turnover.

The community will perceive the court as trustworthy and will also believe the court is working to further the fair administration of justice.

## **INTEGRITY AND TRUST**

### **Associated Behaviors**

- Tells the truth in an appropriate and helpful manner.
- Encourages dialogue.
- Approaches work and others without a hidden agenda.
- Assesses the value of an interchange and reacts appropriately.
- Sets boundaries and respects the boundaries of others.
- Admits mistakes whether they are discovered by himself or herself or others while responding without defensiveness.
- Demonstrates honesty and courage without regard to personal risk.
- Exercises sound and timely judgment.
- Recognizes the success of others.
- Maintains confidences.

### **Intended Outcomes**

Court leaders who act with *Integrity and Trust* earn the confidence of their staff. These leaders are self-effacing and able to acknowledge their mistakes. Staff members know that when the leader says he or she will do something, it's going to get done. The leader keeps the organizational purpose in mind when responding to conflicts within and outside of the organization. The leader maintains an open door with the court unit; staff know that when attention is needed, the leader will be ready to listen. Staff can trust the leader with confidential information. The organization is flexible and not constrained by egos.

When a court leader exhibits *Integrity and Trust*, the court's workforce feel their efforts are appreciated. Staff will resolve disputes effectively by assessing different perspectives to resolve conflicts. Decisions will be made in a consistent and timely manner. Court employees will be treated fairly and treat one another fairly as well.

Leaders will reward individuals when they act ethically and according to the organization's values and also hold accountable those who act in ways that do not align with the organization's values. Court employees will notice several aspects of a highly effective organization, including an increased enthusiasm for aspiring leaders, increased trust of the management team, an increase in healthy dialogue within the organization, a decrease in personnel problems, and a decrease in staff turnover.

CUEs and staff feel secure in their positions, because the chief judge is committed to the vision of the court and not to a personal agenda. Court staff are not drawn into political battles, but are instead allowed to focus on the furtherance of the court's mission and goals.

Supervisors have a greater understanding of what motivates their direct reports. There is a closer bond between supervisors and peers. Staff feel supported by supervisors.

The community—inside and outside the court—will perceive the court as trustworthy. The community will also believe the court is working to further the fair administration of justice.

## **LISTENING**

### **Associated Behaviors**

- Listens with an open mind (doesn't have a preconceived opinion).
- Engages in genuine and meaningful conversations.
- Practices active listening when engaged in conversation.
- Listens completely and doesn't interrupt; allows others to finish what they are attempting to communicate before responding.
- Maintains good eye contact while engaged in conversation.
- Gives others his or her full attention and does not multitask when engaged in conversation.
- Asks questions to clarify what he or she has heard before giving feedback.
- Can restate others' views accurately.
- Follows up as needed.

### **Intended Outcomes**

Court supervisors and deputy CUEs who are skilled in *Listening* get better and more complete information for decision making and earn the trust of their staff. By listening, they ensure that the court unit's environment is more open and there is more clarity. Supervisors can identify underlying motives or concerns and diffuse tensions.

## **MANAGERIAL COURAGE**

### **Associated Behaviors**

- Provides clear direction.
- Ensures that directives and decisions are aligned with core values (personal and organizational).
- Reinforces court unit policies.
- Takes decisive and timely action where appropriate and in the best interest of the court.
- Makes tough but informed decisions.
- Makes the unpopular decisions.
- Acknowledges and handles situations (even difficult ones) as they arise.
- Provides staff with a complete picture of their performance and conduct, offering action steps to help staff either change or improve future behavior.
- Provides constructive feedback.
- Speaks honestly and directly about situations—both positive and negative.

### **Intended Outcomes**

When the court's leaders and managers exhibit *Managerial Courage*, tough and informed decisions are made and staff know where they stand. Leaders and managers do not ignore tough issues, do not hold back anything that needs to be said, and handle issues quickly and effectively. They are willing to take corrective action when necessary. Decisions are made consistently and include follow-up actions as needed. A supervisor who has managerial courage is able to make difficult decisions and thereby decrease the burden on the CUE and the deputy CUE. The leadership and management team is trusted by other employees of the court.

The court unit, as a result, is both fiscally and functionally healthy. There is a decrease in difficult problems, including personnel issues.